

Amos

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Religious hypocrisy is a major theme in the book of Amos, highlighting the glaring contradiction between Israel's outward displays of piety and their profound inward moral decay, particularly their exploitation of the poor. The sources outline several key aspects of this hypocrisy:

A Self-Invented Religion The author notes that Israel's religious practices were not truly directed at God, but were essentially a self-chosen religion, loosely inspired by the Mosaic law but redesigned to suit their own preferences. Because they could not go to the temple in Jerusalem, they established their own altars at Bethel and Gilgal, and invented their own feast days. The Lord mockingly invites them to "Come to Bethel, and transgress," highlighting that they eagerly brought sacrifices and tithes simply because "this liketh you," rather than out of obedience to what God actually commanded. Furthermore, this hollow worship was mixed with outright idolatry, as the people simultaneously worshipped demonic idols like Moloch and Chiun while claiming to serve Jehovah.

A Cover for Injustice and Greed The people used their hyper-religious behaviour as a "calling card to the outside world" and a "covering for the flesh". They proudly appealed to their religious devotion—their temples, tithes, and constant sacrifices—while simultaneously committing grave social injustices. Behind the facade of their worship, they were bribing judges, turning the poor into slaves over minor debts like a pair of shoes, and oppressing the vulnerable.

A striking example of this hypocrisy is their attitude toward the Sabbath and religious festivals. Amos describes how the wealthy would impatiently wait for the new moon and Sabbath to be over so they could immediately resume enriching themselves by falsifying their scales, inflating prices, and selling the refuse (chaff) of the wheat to the poor.

God's Rejection of Hollow Worship Because their religion was used to mask greed and injustice, God utterly rejected it. He declared, "I hate, I despise your feast days," telling the people that their sacrifices were a stench to Him and that He refused to listen to their temple songs and music. The author explains that the people mistakenly thought religion was about *speaking* to God and bringing Him things, whereas God primarily desires that His people *listen* to His Word and put it into practice. Instead of empty rituals, God demanded true morality, declaring: "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream".

Modern Parallels The author strongly argues that this same religious hypocrisy is alive in modern Western culture. He suggests that modern humanism and Western "Christian" culture have borrowed biblical values—like love of neighbour—but have removed Christ and the Word of God from the centre. Just as in the days of Amos, this self-made, modern religion is used to justify and mask economic and political systems that are fundamentally unjust and contrary to the standards of the Lord

From Amos 2 it becomes evident that the Western political and economic system is not pleasing to the Lord. The Lord declares that it does not meet His standard. One would expect that those who know the Lord and His Word would recognise this. That applies first of all to the Jewish people and thereafter certainly also to the Western nations that call themselves Christian. They possess the entire Bible, they know how things ought to be, yet they nevertheless fail to act accordingly. They follow their own ideas about how a state, a people, or an economy ought to be governed, and they heed nothing else. Our society is chiefly driven by a self-invented religion — at best faintly derived from the Bible or even from Moses, though people nowadays hardly know anything about him. Alongside this they adhere to all sorts of other things that they treat as equal to the Bible, or even place above it.

Israel — the ten tribes — was able to develop itself, expand its power, and enlarge its borders. It was a period of prosperity, and that is precisely the setting for these prophecies that announce judgement upon a people that has no interest in the LORD (Jehovah), but relies on its own strength, wealth, and culture. Therefore the LORD, through Amos, proclaimed judgement — a judgement that came about some sixty years later, when Israel was carried away into Assyrian captivity.

Modern interpretations of Amos tend to explain everything away as fulfilled in 722 B.C. If that were true, this biblical book would in practice have nothing more to say. In the same way people dismiss the prophecies concerning the Jewish people, claiming that the prophecies of restoration were fulfilled in the return from the Babylonian exile. But ... in the book of Amos — who prophesied among and to the ten tribes — the prophecies concern the whole of Israel (and also the surrounding nations, including the Philistines). Their final fulfilment lies still in the future, in the days of Christ's second coming. When the same conditions appear again — and they certainly will — the same prophecies become operative once more. God does not change, and in these matters He always acts consistently. The same applies to the favourable outcome for the believing remnant, with which Amos chapter 9 ends. That promise of God naturally rests upon the repentance of the nation, both the two tribes and the ten tribes of Israel. Then the Lord will make the land the most fertile land in the world.

Amos 1:1

The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

The prophet Amos ("burden-bearer") was sent by the LORD to Bethel. This took place in the days of Uzziah (c. 780 B.C.), king of Judah, the two-tribe kingdom. In those same days Jeroboam, the son of Joash (2 Kings 14:23), reigned over Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom. Bethel lay within the ten-tribe kingdom, for although Amos came from the two tribes, his ministry was directed toward the ten tribes. There he was to proclaim judgement upon Israel, for God does nothing without first announcing it. After this, Amos was expelled from the land, and nothing more is heard of him. His words, however, reappear much later in a fundamental passage of the New Testament — namely, in Acts 15. There the quotation comes from the final part of the book, where judgement is no longer in view, but, so to

speak, where the coming of the Messiah is promised. God reveals Himself and declares what He is doing, and also what place we might have in His purposes. Throughout history God has, at certain moments, allowed something of Himself to be heard. That is also the case here, through the ministry of Amos, who was literally taken “from following the oxen” and sent north to carry out his commission.

The first six chapters of Amos consist of direct, literal divine speech: “Thus saith the LORD.” The prophet functions as the mouth of Jehovah. That is the usual meaning of “prophet”: he is the speaker, the mouthpiece. He is not the origin of the words; he is the messenger. Just as our mouth is not the source of our words — they arise from elsewhere — so Amos was not the source of what he spoke. What he proclaimed did not concern Israel alone, although the words were indeed spoken to Israel. At first these prophecies do not concern Israel at all. They begin with Damascus, Gaza, Tyre (Phoenicia, modern Lebanon), Edom, Ammon, and Moab — essentially the neighbouring peoples surrounding Israel. Judgement is announced upon them. One might think: that is good news for Israel, for those troublesome and hostile neighbours will be dealt with. But immediately afterwards the prophecy proceeds directly to Judah, the two tribes, and then to Israel, the ten tribes — the “Northern Kingdom”.

The reign of Jeroboam II marked the historical zenith of the ten tribes’ kingdom. It was the period of Israel’s greatest splendour. This was partly because things were not going well for the surrounding nations — owing to the slow rise of Assyria, which subdued various peoples so that they no longer posed a threat to Israel. Thus Israel could grow, extend its power, and literally enlarge its borders. It was a time of prosperity, and that is precisely why these prophecies announce judgement upon a nation uninterested in the Lord and trusting instead in its own strength, wealth, and culture. Therefore the LORD, through Amos, proclaimed judgement — a judgement executed some sixty years later, when Israel was led away into Assyrian exile after the fall of Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes. On my calendar, that is 722 B.C.

When the same conditions arise again, the same prophecies again apply. For God does not change, and in these matters He always acts the same. A Jewish state arose in the Promised Land — in Palestine — but it was a state in unbelief. Thus all those prophecies again become relevant which announce the final downfall of the unbelieving Jewish state in the land.

Identical circumstances to those in the days of Jeremiah automatically reactivate Jeremiah’s prophecies, meaning that the Jewish state will again be destroyed. The destruction of an unbelieving Jewish state — one that, generally speaking, rejects the Messiah, the LORD — has already happened twice (587 B.C. and A.D. 70). The third time is yet to come.

“Two years before the earthquake” — refers to a particular occasion, namely the festivals instituted in the ten-tribe kingdom and its celebrated at Bethel, which after the division of Israel’s twelve tribes — along with Dan — had been elevated to a holy place. The earthquake of those days appears once more in Scripture, in Zechariah chapter 14, where it is connected with the prophecy of Amos 1.

Zechariah 14:5

5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

This should be a fairly well-known prophecy, for it is that famous passage declaring that when the Messiah comes, He will set His feet upon the Mount of Olives (v. 4) — the only explicit passage that states this. Zechariah 14:1 announces: “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh.” Then judgement will be executed: “thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.” The city of Jerusalem is to be taken, yet a remnant will survive (v. 2). This remnant will flee the city, leaving only hostile armies behind. Then the situation is reversed:

Zechariah 14:3

Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

(See also Ezekiel 39 regarding Gog and Magog, and Joel 2.) The Lord will not fight to rescue the people from the nations, but to rescue the land. The people will by then be either dead or have fled.

Zechariah 14:4

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

One verse earlier the Mount of Olives is said to split in two — an “earthquake”. Thus there is a connection between Zechariah 14 and Amos. The judgements spoken of in Amos have had partial fulfilments in history, but they will ultimately be fulfilled completely in the days of Christ’s return. They are indeed prophetic — not written after the fact, for the events had not yet occurred when Amos wrote.

Both Zechariah and Amos treat the flight from Jerusalem during the ancient earthquake as a picture of how people will flee the city during the future, eschatological earthquake. “Amos” means “burdened”, a “burden-bearer”. Prophetic oracles are often introduced with “the burden of ...”, that is, the charge or responsibility laid upon the prophet. Prophets are, in that sense, burden-bearers — and Amos even bears that as his name. The term “herdman” is elsewhere used in Scripture to describe a king. We do not know how prominent Amos was as herdman, herdsman, or cattle-dealer, but the impression is that he was known in Israel, and throughout the book it is suggested that he knew the land well.

“Tekoa”, in the south of Judah and built by Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11), may be translated “trumpet”, though it can also mean “clarion” or “horn”. As a verb it means “to strike”, which is appropriate, for striking an instrument produces sound — as in a finch’s “song-stroke”.

Finches were bred for their song, for their distinctive “call”.

Tekoa now lies within desert terrain, though apparently not so in those days, for in Amos 7:14 cattle are mentioned — and cattle do not live in the desert.

This is precisely what will happen when Acts 1 is fulfilled:

“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11–12)

On that day there will be an earthquake; the Mount of Olives will indeed split; and of Jerusalem “there shall not be left here one stone upon another” (Matthew 24:2). It will be the final destruction of Jerusalem and of the present Jewish state. The LORD has declared that He will do it.

These prophecies must still receive their definitive fulfilment. I expect this to happen only in the days of Christ’s return.

Someone once objected: “But that cannot be — the Philistines no longer exist.” Yet since the issue in Scripture is not genealogy but inheritance rights, they do indeed exist. The Palestinians claim descent from the Philistines; they behave like soldiers in the same regions and bear essentially the same inherited name. In biblical terms they are, in that sense, the Philistines. The Jewish state exists as well; and not only that — many other lands in Israel’s vicinity that disappeared over the centuries have also re-emerged, most since the First World War and others since the Second. With their ancient names, they are all back on the map. They have returned. The “chess match” broken off at the beginning of our era is soon to resume; the pieces are now more or less back in their places. Soon the game will continue — and we know the outcome. It will not end in a draw...

In my Bible the heading above chapter 1 reads: “Judgements against various nations.” These are the nations around Israel’s borders — the neighbouring peoples, and in some cases even kindred nations: Moab, Ammon, and Edom. From verse 2 of Amos 1 we encounter short prophecies concerning Israel’s neighbours: Syria in the north, Lebanon with Tyre as its capital, then Edom, Ammon, and Moab.

I believe that the judgement God will bring upon all Israel in the future — particularly the ten tribes — will immediately affect the neighbouring peoples. They all exist today, which makes it easier to see how these prophecies might receive a complete fulfilment in the future — something far less obvious in previous centuries.

The Palestinians — the Philistines — are also back on the map. The only thing still missing is a “Greece” in the biblical sense. The term does not refer to the modern nation-state but to the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. Such an empire will undoubtedly arise again, according to other prophecies.

One neighbour I have not yet mentioned is Egypt. Scripture contains quite a number of prophecies concerning Egypt that also await fulfilment. We may encounter these along the way.

Amos 1:2

And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

This same expression is found a few verses earlier, namely in...

Joël 3 : 16

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

In Joel 3 the words “that the heavens and the earth shall shake” follow immediately. The same things are mentioned again. In Joel, in particular, it is about the dawning of the “day of the LORD” — a phrase that occurs many times. In Amos the term is found in chapter 5:18 and 20, where the “day of the LORD” is explicitly named as the time of the Lord’s judgement. First upon Israel, and afterwards upon all nations, upon the whole earth. Although the expression itself does not immediately appear here in Amos 1, we are nevertheless directed to it by the wording: “The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.” That “day of the LORD” begins directly after “the seventieth week of

Daniel". That week will end with the destruction of the Jewish state (see the study "The Seventieth Week").

We can easily work out that it will not only affect the Jewish state. All of this ultimately leads to a natural disaster — namely, a great earthquake, greater even than in the days of Uzziah, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem. Moreover, it will mean that no life will remain in the land. Then it is clear that such a catastrophe will not only strike Israel, but also northern Lebanon, Syria to the east, and further down towards the south. Then we arrive at Ammon, further south at Moab, and further south still at Edom. Then we swing underneath Israel, and come back round to the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians. In that way you cover precisely all those nations briefly mentioned in Amos chapter 1. The only one not named there is Egypt, but Egypt too will come into view in that context. That is evident from certain prophecies which mention that land by name and directly connect it with the events at the end of Daniel's seventieth week and the judgements that will fall upon these countries. The Lord will indeed roar as a lion — out of Zion — and then you immediately know Who this is: "the Lion of the tribe of Judah". It is not for nothing that this term is used in the New Testament (Revelation 5:5). He will lift up His voice from Jerusalem; from there He will speak, and from there He will bring judgement upon the other nations. But the nations, the countries that lie immediately round about, will be dealt with first. Other prophecies state that when the Lord finally presents Himself in Jerusalem, accompanied by a believing remnant from Petra, and comes through the region of Edom, Moab, and Ammon by the King's Highway, then those nations will be judged. That is to say, they will on that occasion be subdued to the King.

Then the kings — here called "shepherds" — will mourn. That is a designation for those kingdoms. As for the phrase "the top of Carmel shall wither", "Carmel" always stands for prosperity and fruitfulness. "Carmel" comes from *kerem*, which means "a fruitful place", and it will fare badly.

Amos 1:3–5

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: 4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. 5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

It appears that the "plain of Aven" is the same as what is usually referred to as Baalbek — also called Heliopolis, though Heliopolis is also a name used for a city in Egypt. It is a city dedicated to the sun, the sun-god. Baalbek in Syria is today a ruin, but a very famous one. When you read this, it is almost like a cryptic puzzle, but it is not that bad. The difficulty is that we do not know the detailed history, and what we do know is drawn from just a few Scripture passages. That makes it somewhat challenging. The language is quite elevated, at a higher literary level, and we find that difficult because it makes it harder for us to understand — and that has been the case for a very long time. We simply need to make the effort to understand what is written.

The first formula is the hardest: “for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four”. After that we get used to it, because in verse 6 it says, “for three transgressions of Gaza, and for four”; and in verse 9, “for three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four”; and in verse 11, “for three transgressions of Edom, and for four”; and in verse 13, “for three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four”. What is meant by “for three” and “for four”?

In the end it is quite simple. It is an idiom. When Scripture speaks of “two or three”, which occurs quite often, it refers to a small number — just a few, not many, and the exact count does not really matter. It is Hebrew idiom, but you also encounter it in the New Testament, for instance in the saying:

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

We do not take that expression strictly numerically; it means “a few”, “a minority”. It implies that those who gather truly in His Name are by definition a minority. One of the biblical words for a minority is “remnant”.

With “three or four” you take it a step further. That no longer means “few”, but “many”. Is three or four really many? Not in itself, but “three or four” carries the sense of “numerous”, “enough to count as serious”. The number is large enough to make it weighty, and therefore judgement will come. Where exactly the phrase comes from, what lies behind it, I do not know. But I do know that in Scripture “four” frequently has the sense of “a full extent” or “the whole compass”, a maximum — especially in the material, earthly realm. “Four” often signifies “in every direction”, “to all quarters”. In English we say “a couple is two”, though that is by no means always the case, but it gives the idea of “not very many”. “Three or four” in this context means that quite a lot has gone wrong. In practice only one specific transgression is listed, but the phrase “three or four” indicates that it did not stop with that one sin — not in the past, and likely not in the future either. There would be further such offences. With that number — three or four — you are automatically pointed towards a possible future application or fulfilment of these prophecies.

The point is that judgement will come upon all of Syria. The same is true when judgement is announced upon Jerusalem: it immediately applies to the whole land. The king of Assyria, in the days of Ahaz king of Judah, removed the Syrians out of the land (2 Kings 16). This prophecy of Amos has indeed had a historical fulfilment. Yet I consider it quite likely that in the future this prophecy will again have an application — namely, that God will in a general sense bring judgement upon Syria. Whether that will be fulfilled in every literal detail, I do not know, but I believe that all these prophecies will in some way or other find fulfilment in the “day of the LORD”, that is, in the days of Christ’s return. These prophecies will repeat themselves. Under the same conditions, the same prophecies again become operative.

Amos 1:6–10

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:⁷ But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:⁸ And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.⁹ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus,

and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

From verse 6 onwards the view broadens. We arrive at Gaza, and in total four of the five Philistine cities are mentioned: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron. These places are still traceable today. Some no longer as full cities, but perhaps only as suburbs — yet they are there again. Gath is not mentioned.

“The remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.” That happened in the past; and after many centuries in which we heard nothing of the Philistines, the same thing will happen again. The Philistines have, in a sense, “re-established” themselves. They are back on the map, by biblical standards. They call themselves by that name (Palestinians), they live in the same areas, and they behave in essentially the same way. Where there is a people that calls itself a people, lives in the same territory with the same names, they are simply the heirs of that ancient nation; they occupy the same position and thereby bring the same judgement upon themselves.

Likewise, those people who have established the state of Israel and live in it, literally occupy the position of Judah, in Judea. And that means that the curse resting upon that people and that land rests upon them. Whoever they may be, that does not matter — that is how it works. That is why it is rather dangerous to claim that land, for it is “a land that devoureth up the inhabitants thereof” (cf. Ezekiel 36:13). The issue here is purely inheritance rights. That those rights are in large measure determined by descent may be so — that is the normal order of things — but it is secondary.

Thus, in our own day, we again have Philistines. Yet they thereby take upon themselves the guilt of that ancient Philistine people, just as a modern Jewish state takes upon itself the guilt of the old unbelieving Jewish state that not only crucified the Lord, but later rejected Him. As to the crucifixion, let me say very clearly that Scripture teaches this has been forgiven them. The point is that afterwards they were unwilling to believe in the Risen One. Therefore judgement came upon the Jewish state. If the present Jewish state likewise does not believe in the risen Christ, in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the same judgement will fall upon them again. Then the same prophecies are reactivated, Jerusalem is destroyed, and “there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13:2). That is how it works. It is a fixed principle.

The judgement that will come upon the Philistines is said to arise because they handed over Israel — at least a part of it — into the hand of Edom.

2 Chronicles 21:16–17

Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians.17 And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

This is the event to which the prophecy regarding the Philistines in Amos 1 refers. One might object that we have just read that it was the LORD Himself who stirred up the spirit of the Philistines and the Arabians against Jehoram — and that is indeed so. But we do not know how that looks “from God’s side”. This phenomenon occurs more often in Scripture, yet it

does not remove the responsibility of those nations. At the very least the story has two sides. The Lord “stirred up the spirit of the Philistines”, but on the other hand it was not particularly difficult: the Philistines were all too ready to act in this way.

The Lord sometimes uses Israel’s enemies to bring judgement upon Israel, but afterwards judgement also comes upon those very enemies. Scripture speaks of a judgement upon the Philistines in the days of Christ’s return. So for centuries we should already have known that there would not only again be an unbelieving Jewish state, but also once more a Philistine — or Palestinian — people, for they are mentioned in prophetic Scripture.

There are quite a number of prophecies on this theme, but Zechariah 9 is particularly clear. My Bible places the heading “Chastisement of various nations” above it.

Zechariah 9:1–6

The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.² And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.³ And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.⁴ Behold, the LORD will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.⁵ Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.⁶ And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

“Shall border thereby” in verse 2 has the sense of “shall be included” or “shall be brought within the scope” — that is, “shall be brought to order”. Verse 1 speaks of Syria; verse 2 of Tyre (on an island or peninsula in the sea) and Sidon, that is, Lebanon or Phoenicia. Then there is a jump southwards: with Ashkelon you are among the cities of the Philistines. “I [the LORD] will cut off the pride of the Philistines,” verse 6 concludes, and verse 7 continues in the same vein.

Verses 8 and 9 speak of Christ’s coming in His first advent:

Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

We know for certain that this was fulfilled at the entry into Jerusalem — and yet, in another sense, it was not. That is to say, it was indeed fulfilled, but not completed; its full realisation lies still in the future. It is therefore genuinely a statement about the second coming of Christ. What precedes it, and what follows it, also concerns that future:

Zechariah 9:10–11

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.¹¹ As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

It is a matter of the revival of the state of Israel — by which I do not mean merely a “Jewish state”, but an Israelite state. And then the LORD says:

Zechariah 9:13

When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons,
O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.
The Lord prepares His weapons, and those weapons are Ephraim and Judah — the ten and the two tribes, all twelve tribes together. Where it says “O Greece”, the Hebrew reads “Javan” — the name for the Greek kingdom, which is not the Greece we see on our modern maps, but the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great.

At Christ’s first coming that empire no longer existed; at His second coming it will. What it will be called then I do not know, but Scripture refers to it as “Greece”. So also in Daniel 8, where we are dealing with the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great, but where the text passes almost seamlessly into a description of that figure from the end-time — the antichrist, the beast, the little horn, or the great horn — the exact title makes little practical difference. While the prophet is speaking of Alexander the Great, you suddenly realise that he is speaking of a person who is yet to appear in the future.

That final world empire is therefore not a so-called “restored Roman Empire”, but a restored Greek Empire — that of Alexander the Great, the son of Philip, king of Macedon. Alexander was heir to the Macedonian throne, but left for the east and never returned. He crossed the Bosphorus, conquered the east as far as the mountains of India, and then turned back in order to rebuild his capital — Babylon. And that is precisely what will happen in the future with that new Greek empire: it will be centred in the Middle East, an Arab empire in the Arab world, with Babylon as its capital. Alexander the Great, however, came to a sudden end — and so will that future figure. It will be the same pattern.

Here that judgement is announced, for a restored Israel will be the declared opponent of Javan; that empire of the antichrist will fall by Israel’s hand — that is what is stated here. And you find the Philistines in this context too, for they will most certainly play a role in the future. A prophecy against the Philistines already appears in Isaiah 8 and 14. The one in chapter 8 is coupled with the prophecy concerning Damascus.

Isaiah 8:4

For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

This speaks of the same events we have already read about, in which Assyria conquered Damascus. Damascus had seized the spoil of Samaria — the ten-tribe kingdom — for itself. This prophecy was to be fulfilled within Isaiah’s own days. Yet, as with other prophecies, it also has a fulfilment in the future.

Isaiah 14:28–32

In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.²⁹ Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.³⁰ And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.³¹ Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou,

whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times.³²

What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

“Palestina” is the land of the Palestinians — the Philistines. It is not Israel. Only in Roman times was the name “Palestine” applied to the whole land of Canaan. Normally it denotes what we now call the Gaza Strip. That is “Philistia”, “Palestina”.

It would take us too far afield to discuss it at length here, but that “fiery flying serpent” is simply Christ, the Seraph, the Fiery Serpent (Isaiah 6:6). It is indeed about a descendant of the royal house of David, who will bring judgement upon the Philistines. That still has to happen. It is clearly a Messianic prophecy.

Jeremiah 47 also prophesies against the Philistines, and there Tyre and Sidon are mentioned as well.

Jeremiah 47:1–7

The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.² Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.³ At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands;⁴ Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.⁵ Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?⁶ O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.⁷ How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.

In the book of Ezekiel the Philistines appear again. In Ezekiel 25 we first find the prophecy against the Ammonites, and from verse 8 onwards the prophecy against the Moabites. Then from verse 12 the prophecy against Edom. In that way the whole region east of the Jordan is dealt with, and then the focus moves to the area west of the Jordan, south of Israel, to the Philistines.

Ezekiel 25:15–17

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred;¹⁶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast.¹⁷ And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them. There are several other nations listed with “three, yea, four” transgressions for which judgement is announced. From verse 9 (of Amos 1) we are dealing with Tyre, “because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant.” Tyre had a covenant with the ten tribes of Israel — first with David and then with Solomon. That was king Hiram, who also contributed to the

building of the temple. But Tyre behaved wickedly towards Israel, and therefore the Lord says He will “send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.”

Amos 1:11–12

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

“Edom” are the descendants of Esau — a brother nation, and therefore it says “his brother” when Israel is meant. This passage implies that Edom has continually behaved with hostility towards Israel, and that it will remain so to the end. Bozrah is the name of Edom’s capital — that is Petra, from ancient times. Judgement would come upon it. No specific event is mentioned, no detailed historical situation, because this is a general summary of what has always happened and would continue to happen afterwards. Especially after the days of Amos, Edom acquired quite a few “black pages” in its history, and other prophecies return to that.

Amos 1:13–15

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

“Ammon” we know as “Amman”, the capital of Jordan — still preserving the memory of the name “Ammon”. “Rabbah” in verse 14 is that city. “In the day of battle” and “in the day of the whirlwind” point, in my view, to the “day of the LORD” in chapter 5.

Amos 2:1

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Before Israel itself comes into view, Moab is mentioned. Moab lies between Ammon and Edom, east of the Dead Sea. Ruth, the wife of Boaz (of the tribe of Judah), came from Moab. With the words, “and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet”, we are already pointed very clearly towards the second coming of Christ.

Ultimately these prophecies are about that.

In chapter 2 we get a little more about Moab, and it is just as unclear as the previous oracles, because it is never completely certain what precise events are referred to. Did these things take place in the days of Amos? Or are they still future? I do not know. We cannot identify the historical fulfilment. For what is said as the reason for judgement upon Moab? “Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.” When did that happen? How

and where? You cannot trace it in history. In the Old Testament you do find that such things happened, but that is as far as it goes — and that the LORD finds such things an abomination.

Sometimes a corpse is burned; sometimes a grave is opened and bones are burned.

Something like that must be in view here, but when and under what circumstances, we do not know. What we do know, from the Mosaic Law as well, is that desecrating a grave is perhaps regarded as even more serious than murder. The point is that a grave is connected with the future — with the “hereafter”, with resurrection or life in and beyond death.

Moreover, a person who has died cannot defend himself, and when he is then violated, that is taken very seriously — also by the Lord.

What is recorded is partly, or even entirely, untraceable to us. Perhaps it ought to be traceable, for the general thought is that these prophecies were given in connection with relatively recent events among these nations. But that does not mean that we know that history. The fulfilment of the prophecy against Moab is likewise not to be found in the historical record.

To me it seems most likely — as with all prophecies — that they received an initial fulfilment in the past, so that those who wish can always insist that everything has already been fulfilled, and yet that nevertheless the same prophecies will receive a further — and definitive — fulfilment in the future. A fulfilment in the past functions in Scripture as an example, an illustration, of the final fulfilment of precisely the same prophecy.

A clear example is the prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. That happened in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but that does not mean it would not happen again. It did happen again in the days of the Romans, in A.D. 70. Then the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish state were destroyed, shortly after the New Testament books were completed. The same prophecies will yet again be fulfilled in the days of Christ’s return.

Amos 2:2

But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kiriath: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

Fire signifies judgement, and that will come upon Kiriath, one of Moab’s cities. It means that Moab will disappear, but accompanied by “tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet”. Because of that trumpet the whole scene points strongly to the days of the second coming of Christ. The trumpet in Scripture can mean various things, but in any case it is associated with the proclamation of the word of the greatest King — the Messiah. So I take this to apply to the days of His return.

Amos 2:3

And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

There are all sorts of speculations about what that might have meant in the days of Amos, but they do not really help us. The point is that Moab will be judged, especially those in authority there — the leaders who bear responsibility for the land and the people. Those

are the princes. There was always just one king, but the other members of the royal house, the nobility, are called “princes”.

Then the next prophecy follows seamlessly. You pass over it almost without noticing, and suddenly it is really about Israel. For after all the well-known, traditionally hostile neighbouring or brother-nations of Israel have been named, we suddenly come to Judah, from which Amos himself came.

Amos 2:4–5

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

The same formula “for three transgressions ... and for four” is used again. But now the judgement that came upon “the palaces of Kirioth” is announced upon Jerusalem in Judah — the place from which the kingdom is ruled. That already happened once after the days of Amos. Twice, in fact. In between, in the days of the Maccabees, there were also a few events of a similar kind; and it will happen again in the future, “because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments.” That was so in the days of Amos, nearly 800 years before Christ, and it is still so today.

Notice carefully what is said here, and let it sink in that this sweeps away the popular idea that the Jewish people, through the centuries since the exodus from Egypt, have in some way always upheld the law of the LORD. Whenever you read about “Jewish tradition”, that is the impression given. Those who speak like that even regard Moses as a Jew who led the “Jewish people” out of Egypt, and then the Lord gave the law to the Jewish people. This is nonsense. Moses was not a Jew, and it was not the Jewish people that were delivered from Egypt.

In practice, people project the present-day position of the religious, Judaistic Jewish people as far back into history as possible. And then you end up with “Joseph the Jew”, and even the idea that Abraham was a Jew. But the point was not a Jewish people. It was the people of Israel, and of them Scripture generally says that they received the “law of the LORD”, but did not keep it. That is what Stephen says, too:

Acts 7:53

Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

The Jewish leaders were furious at these words, but they were true — as the Old Testament history of Israel shows. They had received the word of God, but they never really cared for it. Instead they served other gods. They still left the temple standing, but it fell into serious neglect. No one had looked after it for many years, until at one point in history they started cleaning it up. The thorns were cut away, and then they found something in the temple that they had not expected at all — the books of Moses. They read them with astonishment. These were brought to the king with the message: you must see what we have found! In short, they had never, or only sporadically and very imperfectly, kept the “law of the LORD”.

However, I am not inclined here in Amos 2:4 to read “law” merely as a set of rules, but in the true sense of the term: “instruction” — instruction in the truth, that is. The word “law” in

the Old Testament is usually Torah. In English that is linked to the word for “faithfulness”, for that which endures; and in English to “true” and “truth”. That is what remains. “Torah” appears in various languages and means “instruction” in the classical sense: teaching that has to do with knowing the truth.

The classical view was that true “science” can only concern things that are imperishable. Real wisdom, true knowledge, always relates to what is permanent.

Instruction in the eternal, imperishable word of God also takes shape in “commandments and statutes”. Prescribed rituals form part of the teaching, because they illustrate the truth.

Truth remains and therefore should indeed be preserved. Truth stands firm; it is to be known, and our very existence is to be grounded in it. To share in imperishable truth is to share in imperishable life. Hence there is salvation through hearing the Word of God. And so one would, by definition, preserve that Word, because it is truth. But they did not. Instead we read: “and their lies caused them to err.”

This of course refers to liars — deceivers. And who are these liars? You know who they are: those who in reality have nothing to say. For if you truly have something to say, it must concern imperishable things. That is why they are called “idols” — “dumb idols” even (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:2), and also liars, under the leadership of “a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). The dumb idols — demons in practice — form the staff of the devil. Their “lies”, that is, their liars, “caused them to err” (see also 1 Timothy 4:1–2). The phrase “after the which their fathers have walked” shows that this had been going on for generations. The apostle Peter says in this connection that you “were redeemed from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” (cf. 1 Peter 1:18). It is to be expected that that “vain conversation”, that empty way of life, was inspired by evil spirits — by demons, lying spirits. That is how it works.

The point is that these things were always going on. Not just once or twice, but throughout their history. The same applies to the other prophecies. A particular way of life is summed up in a single example. Essentially, in the case of Israel, it comes down to this one thing: that they have let go of the Word of God. You can hardly say that of other nations, but of Israel you can, and you must — because that is what makes Israel to be Israel: that “unto them were committed the oracles of God”.

Romans 3:2

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

But they let go of that Word, and thereby forfeited the right to that particular title and role.

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

If they are dismissed from the priesthood, they are no longer Israel, for “Israel” is by definition a priestly people. Judgement upon Israel has, in a sense, already taken place in the past, but in the future it will come again. In practice, that means judgement upon the entire land as such — upon everything that claims the name Israel. Whether it claims that name, or simply claims to be Jewish, remains to be seen. I believe that judgement will come upon all who think they can claim part or all of that land — whoever they may be.

That is what Scripture teaches, it seems to me: that when the Lord comes in His second coming, this will be accompanied by judgement upon all the inhabitants of the land — upon Judah in the first place. But it goes further still:

Amos 2:6–8

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;⁷ That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane:⁸ And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

Verse 6 relates to court cases. This is something we encounter often in Scripture, especially in the prophets, because evidently the Lord is deeply offended when injustice occurs precisely in the places where justice ought to be done. Here a righteous man is sold for money. That is to say, the judge is bribed. Those responsible for justice do the very opposite. The poor man is sold “for a pair of shoes”. This appears to be a fixed expression. We find it again in Amos 8. The idea is that someone who has a debt worth no more than a pair of sandals — hardly anything — is condemned.

Under Israel’s law, if someone could not pay his debt and had no more goods to sell, he himself was sold. Whoever could not pay his debts ended up in slavery. In this way people are impoverished and enslaved for the sake of a very small debt.

Verse 7 shows that they take delight in the oppression of the poor. There must be a difference, after all... In many cultures people prefer the gap between rich and poor to be as wide as possible. Such differences exist and are consciously maintained — that is the point made here. The poor must be kept small. “They turn aside the way of the meek” means that the meek person — someone receptive, easily influenced — is taken advantage of. It speaks of oppression in practice.

“And a man and his father will go in unto the same maid.” Does that need explanation? The Mosaic law has quite a bit to say about that. They do it “to profane my holy name”. It runs counter to the most obvious social and moral norms. I shall try to put it politely, for these are not very decent matters to mention. Presumably this falls into the category of “paying in kind”.

As for “clothes laid to pledge” and “the wine of the condemned”, in both cases it is about the payment of debts or fines and punishments, where payment was made in kind. The idea is that the court imposes fines and then appropriates the proceeds for itself. The penalty is paid in clothing or in wine, and they keep it. The fine should still go somewhere — and they use it in the presence of, and before the face of, their gods. They are considered religious men, but that does not prevent them from acting in this unjust way.

When Judah (in verse 5) and Israel (in verse 6) are mentioned side by side, two different things are in view, unless it is explicitly stated that they concern the same matter, which is not the case here. They are two distinct entities. Judah stands for the two tribes of Israel — what is usually called “Jewish”; Israel stands for the ten tribes — what has from of old been called “Israel” in the proper sense. The name is a title, and that name — that title — is

passed on via the firstborn. Thus the name “Israel” is inherited from Israel, that is, Jacob, via Joseph to Ephraim — not to the tribe of Judah, but to Ephraim.

When the kingdom was divided after the days of Solomon, the name “Israel” therefore went with the ten tribes. The LORD Himself also went with the ten tribes, and of Judah — the two tribes — it is said that they departed from Israel. Since then the two tribes no longer officially bore the name “Israel”. The Jewish people are designated by the name of their own tribe: “Judah”.

But that is not the whole story, for after Israel (the ten tribes) disappeared from the stage and lost the name, the Jews later claimed that name for themselves, and so in the New Testament the term “Israel” is indeed applied to the Jewish people. But that is secondary, in the “absence” of the ten tribes, who disappeared into Assyrian exile (722 B.C.). They have not officially returned from there, even though they did not remain in captivity as such. In any case, they have not returned as a people to their original land — perhaps a few individuals, but those are exceptions.

So in these verses (6–8) it is about “Israel”: the ten tribes, who at that time had not yet gone into exile. We are told what they were doing wrong. Then there follows a list of what the LORD had done for Israel in the past.

Amos 2:9–10

Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.¹⁰ Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. “The land of the Amorite” was that of the Canaanites, who in a broader sense are counted as Amorites. On the positive side, the thought here is that the Lord led them for forty years through the wilderness. On the negative side, it is that it took forty years at all, because Israel as a nation was unbelieving and did not wish to serve the LORD. Those who were delivered out of Egypt did not even reach Canaan, with the exception of two men. It was the next generation who entered that land, where at that time the Amorites (the Canaanites) lived, to possess it as an inheritance.

They certainly did not do this unlawfully. Much earlier we read that when the Lord divided up the earth among the nations (Genesis 10) — that is, when He distributed the nations over the earth — He reserved a specific portion of land for Israel, as His wife. That was His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1, 6–7). That the Amorites were living in that land when Joshua and the Israelites arrived was unlawful; therefore the LORD said: if they do not leave, you are to wipe them out, for they do not belong there — they are occupying it illegally. Jehovah — “I” — did all this; but instead of serving the LORD afterwards, they served idols. Instead of being righteous, as the Lord Himself is, they were unjust. The whole nation had once been in slavery, but that they then kept slaves themselves and oppressed and abused them is something the LORD holds against them.

What is said in verse 10 can be said of both Israel and Judah. But here it is said only of Israel, because this prophecy is addressed specifically to the ten tribes of Israel. That the LORD has done much for Israel will be clear enough. Yet here judgement is announced over them. Strangely enough, it is not because they have despised the “law of the LORD” and not kept His statutes. One might have expected that. But the ten tribes, in earlier times, had never taken any notice of that “law of the LORD”. They simply did not know the Word of God —

the law. Since the days of Jeroboam they did not have the Lord and His Word, among other things because they had no temple in which the Word of God was preserved. Therefore it is not charged to them that they rejected that Word. The Jews, however, were reproached for this, because they had the LORD, but would not listen to Him.

Verse 9 therefore is much easier to apply to our present time and to the time that is still to come — not only because we know that judgement will come upon all these nations, including the Jews, but also upon the ten tribes, whoever and wherever they may be.

Amos 2:11–12

And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD.¹² But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.

Through those prophets God blessed all Israel, because the Word of the LORD was spoken to them. But they did not value it — and that is precisely the issue here. That is what now brings this judgement upon them.

“I raised up of your sons for prophets” is parallel to “of your young men for Nazarites.” In Numbers 6 you find the law concerning the Nazarite vow. In the Bible we really know only one Nazarite by name: Samson (Judges 13–16); but here we are told that there were several. What practical advantage or purpose this Nazariteship had, I do not know. What function these Nazarites were intended to have in Israel is not stated. You only read of the promise attached to Nazariteship (Numbers 6:20). Perhaps through that vow they were bound to certain activities that would be for the good of the people; but what those activities were, I cannot tell you.

The Nazarites were not allowed to drink wine — but that command was also ignored. In addition, they silenced the prophets (see also Amos 7:12–13; Nehemiah 9:26). That is how it has always gone. The Lord Jesus puts it even more strongly in Matthew 23:31:

“Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.” In any case, they did not want to listen to the Word of the LORD. On top of that, there was the strange notion that if a prophet said something, that utterance in itself was the cause and driving force that brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy. So they thought that if they paid the prophet well enough (gave him wine to drink), he would pronounce a prophecy to their liking. And then they reasoned that because the man was a prophet, what he had said would indeed come to pass. In the same way many people nowadays believe that, if only you pray loudly and often enough, and especially get special people to pray for you — for a fee — things will then happen accordingly...

What follows upon all this can only be God’s judgement.

Amos 2:13–16

Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.¹⁴ Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:¹⁵ Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.¹⁶ And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

They will be afflicted, brought under pressure, placed under judgement. Literally, it says they will be “overrun”, “crushed”, as it were. “Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift” — for the Lord will not turn away this judgement. This judgement will certainly come. The strong man will find his strength useless; it will not help him. The mighty man will not save his own life.

In short, they will not escape. This is repeated: “he that handleth the bow shall not stand” (he will not remain standing), and “he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself, neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.” There is no fleeing from it; no way to get away.

“And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day.” That is, they will lose everything. I think this is a euphemism for dying. We are born naked; we bring nothing into the world, and we leave it with nothing. I believe that is what is meant here: a total judgement upon the nation.

The question is: has this already happened in the past? I must admit I cannot prove it, but I think not. The answer depends on how literally we read this prophecy. If I take it literally, I have to say it has not yet been fulfilled. There was a judgement upon the ten tribes some decades later: the ten-tribe kingdom was taken away into Assyrian exile — at least for the most part. But there were those who escaped. The same with the Babylonian exile of the two tribes: the majority of the people were deported, but not everyone. Here, however, the judgement is described as one that will affect all the inhabitants of the land. I do not believe that has happened yet.

I am inclined to take it literally, because we have other prophecies that indeed announce similar judgements — at least those concerning the Jewish state in the days of Christ’s second coming. Of that time it is explicitly said that no life at all will remain in the land — not even animal life, and not even plant life. That is: it will be completely devoured by fire (Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8). If the Lord was able to bring a judgement of fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, then He can do so in the future. Scripture simply states that the Lord will remove all life from the land. The very words “without form, and void” from Genesis 1:2 are used again — not only in connection with the Jewish state, but also in connection with Edom, using exactly the same phrasing. It is a judgement from God, carried out with exact precision. No one escapes.

The final judgement upon humanity will be exactly the same: none will remain — except the believers. Everyone else is “blotted out” — they shall be no more.

Psalm 69:28

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

At Christ’s return such a judgement will be brought upon all the nations of the earth, upon the whole world population. Only believers will remain, for the unbelievers will be taken away. Summarising all these prophecies, the Lord Jesus says this in Matthew 24.

In that particular passage He is not speaking of the “Last Day” (after the thousand years), but about the time just before the thousand years. In verse 37 He begins with a reference to the “days of Noah”:

Matthew 24:37–41

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and

giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.⁴⁰ Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.⁴¹ Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

According to verse 37, this concerns the coming, the presence (parousia) of the Son of Man at a time when people, just as in the days before the flood, will be occupied with earthly things, and nothing else. They will have no eye for the service of God. When Noah entered the ark, they knew not. Only when “the flood came, and took them all away” did they know — and “so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Then too, one will be taken — and that is exactly what the text says — and another left. The one taken is removed by death, just as in the days of Noah — he disappears from the earth. Not to heaven, of course, but downwards; for on earth the kingdom of Christ will then be established, and only believers will enter it — again, just as only the eight souls entered the ark in Noah’s day. The example is clear enough. A judgement is coming upon the whole of mankind, with the exception of “Noah and those with him”.

This is repeated in Matthew 25, where the judgement of the nations is described. There too it is always the unbelievers who disappear, ultimately into “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46). Such a judgement upon all nations will take place in the days of Christ’s return, when “the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” (Matthew 25:31). It is obvious to conclude that when this judgement begins (the seventieth week of Daniel) with that Jewish people, the next step will be a judgement upon Israel — the ten tribes. Then the priority will be the gathering of all twelve tribes of Israel, so that from them the 144,000 (Revelation 7:4) can be appointed as servants to preach the Gospel. They will carry out this work in the days of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21) among all nations. So first judgement upon Judah, and afterwards upon the ten tribes of Israel. Then we are indeed in the Western world, among Western nations, even though they may live very far south or east today.

Why should this description of all these abuses not be a description of the present abuses in Western society? Because we happen to be relatively prosperous, and think that, comparatively speaking, things like injustice and corruption are not so bad? But our economic and political systems do not correspond to the “law of the LORD”. They really are not in order.

The arrogance with which we think that we must spread democracy across the world, as if that were the Gospel! It is totally unbiblical. Out of a lack of respect for others, out of contempt and rejection of authority, we have invented democracy. In practice, under the circumstances we know and given the essential nature of man in the West, there is no better system — but that still does not make it good. When the Lord comes, that will be the end of all forms of democracy. The only “democratic” element then will be that mankind can choose whether or not to submit to Him. Whoever does not, will pay with his life. And yes, that is a free choice — but for every choice you make, you must bear the consequences. That is simply how it is.

The Western political and economic system is not pleasing to the Lord, as appears from Amos 2. The Lord says it does not meet His standard. Certainly, if people know the Lord and His Word, they ought to know this. That applies primarily to the Jewish people, and then certainly also to the Western nations — those supposedly Christian nations. They possess

the whole Bible; they know how things ought to be, but they still do not do it — any more than Israel did. They have their own ideas about how a state, a people, an economy, and the like ought to be run. And they take no notice of God's Word. In the days when this judgement comes, we are already beyond the time of the rapture of the Church. That is, we are then dealing only with an unbelieving remainder, for the believing remnant has already been taken away. After the downfall of the Jewish state, the downfall of the Western world logically follows. That is not only Western Europe, but also America, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and more besides. That immediately explains how, in those same days, the centre of human culture can be located in the Middle East — which will then be, in any case, the richest region in the world.

In Amos — who prophesied among and to the ten tribes — the prophecies concern all Israel, and these will yet receive their final fulfilment in the future, in the days of Christ's return.

Amos 3:1

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

The name "Israel" in verse 1 is, to avoid misunderstanding, immediately followed by the phrase "the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt." So here it refers to the entire nation — all the tribes — as is clear from the mention of the exodus from Egypt. A "family" is not necessarily an entire nation; it can also be a part of it; but here it clearly means the whole people.

Amos 3:2

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

This "knowing" means to have a share with, to have fellowship with — to have communication with. The Lord has spoken and acted in a special way with Israel. That is why Israel is referred to as the chosen people. They were to be a priestly nation, proclaiming the words of God.

Paul says about this, at that point limiting it to the Jews:

Romans 3:1–2

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Through Israel, that specifically appointed royal and priestly people, God would do His work and speak to the other nations. For that purpose the Lord walked in fellowship with that people and allowed Himself to be named in connection with them. He was not only the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but in particular — under the Name Jehovah — the God of Israel.

Precisely because Israel is that chosen people, from the time of the deliverance from Egypt, judgement will come upon them. The LORD therefore says: "therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." This "punishing" is what Scripture elsewhere calls "visiting" — visiting in the sense of chastening.

This, of course, concerns an unbelieving nation that does not listen to the Word of the LORD. That is unbelief — in other words, sin. It is wrong, simply put. For precisely because they knew that Word of God, because the Lord spoke to them, their iniquity can be laid to their charge. They cannot say, “We did not know any better.” They did know better; they had the Word of God.

Therefore, when God comes to judge the nations, He will begin with “the house of God”. This is even quoted in the New Testament:

1 Peter 4:17

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? God begins with His own people, those who are closest to Him. Sadly, many think that because Israel is the chosen people, they will escape these judgements. But in fact the opposite is true. Concerning these judgements, which begin with the “day of the Lord”, Paul writes that they “shall not escape”:

1 Thessalonians 5:2–3

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

From verse 3 to verse 6 in Amos 3 we have a long run-up to verse 7, at which we might be inclined to think: where is this going, and when does the argument continue? But the idea is very simple: things always have a cause. They must come from somewhere. There has to be a reason, a trigger, for events. If “two walk together”, you know they have met somewhere; their walking together is the result of that prior meeting. The world consists of chains of cause and effect.

The point here is: since God has spoken (prophesied), judgement will come — because they have not adhered to His Word. That is inevitable; it is a matter of cause and effect, just as illustrated by the other examples.

In verse 6 it becomes even more pointed: “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?” In other words, if the trumpet is blown in the city, the people will tremble. Blowing the trumpet is raising the alarm, and then the people begin to fear — cause and effect again.

Then, “shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” The evil in the city is apparently brought about by the Lord Himself.

That the Lord uses “evil”, as well as good, in His work and in His plan is clear from Isaiah 45:7:

Isaiah 45:7

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

“Create” means to make, to design, to bring into being; and the thought is that God has also “created evil” so that He might use it for good. This does not mean “sin”, as some assume. God creates both evil and good in the sense of calamity and blessing, judgement and peace. God “curses” (Genesis 12:3); God brings death; but God also gives life. God causes “all things” — particularly the evil things — “to work together for good” (Romans 8:28). That is why God can say, “I create evil” or “I create the destroyer”, because He uses these things for His good purpose.

In that context Isaiah goes on to speak of the judgement of exile, but also of the “everlasting salvation” (Isaiah 45:17) that will follow, and that for “all the seed of Israel” (Isaiah 45:25). God, the LORD, will inevitably bring judgement — that is what is being said here.

Amos 3:7–8

Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.⁸ The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The Lord always announces beforehand what He is going to do. God is, first of all, the One who speaks, and only in the second place the One who acts. Yet God always does what He has said.

People point out that God can “repent” of what He has spoken, and they refer for example to Jonah 3:10 and the city of Nineveh:

Jonah 3:10

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. But Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was indeed destroyed later on. Besides, this is not about “repentance” in the human sense we know — regret about something done or said. When the word “repent” is used of God in Scripture, it has to do with a change, a turning in the situation.

The responsibility of the prophets is to pass on that Word of God. Amos, answering the question of verse 8, is effectively saying: I will, in any case, prophesy, because the Lord (“Adonai” = “the Master”) GOD has spoken, and I am passing on that Word. So Amos comes to announce that calamity would come upon the people, so that everyone could take note of it — and, for later generations, can still take note of it. In that way people could, and still can, escape a judgement of God. God informs everyone. That people do not wish to listen to Him is another matter.

So if someone says: “I did not know”; or if a theologian says: “We actually know very little about God”, then that is his own responsibility. He ought to have paid more attention — to have listened to the Word of the Lord.

The word “secret” in verse 7 is the translation of the Hebrew סֵד (sôd, Strong’s H5475). It means something like “council” or “confidential counsel”. Even so, the rendering “secret” in the KJV is not at all wrong. The word suggests drawing inward, shutting oneself off. One withdraws, encloses oneself, and then does something, or speaks something, or thinks something, in secret — that is, not publicly. It is the opposite of doing something openly. Here it is about something that did not come about in public. The Lord, as it were, has gone into His inner chamber and there formed a plan. That plan arose there in secret. That hidden work of God is not open to the world; it is done in the hidden place. The heart of the matter is not that it is “secret” for secrecy’s sake, but that it is protected. It is withdrawn from sight for that purpose. When God formed that plan, no one else was present. So no one knew anything of it — and therefore He made it known “unto his servants the prophets”. For it is, in this case, not at all His intention that it should remain hidden.

Here in Amos the Lord makes His “counsel” known through His prophets. That is also what verse 8 says: “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” And so Amos prophesies what the LORD has spoken. It is really the introduction to his prophecy. After that, from verse 9 onwards, we have, as far as I am concerned, a new section — that is where the prophecy itself begins.

Amos 3:9

Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.

Here other nations — namely the Philistines and the Egyptians — are summoned to come and “look around” in Samaria. Why? To see that the situation there in Samaria is even worse than among the Philistines or the Egyptians. Ashdod is one of the Philistine cities.

The point being made is that the social and religious circumstances in Israel, “the mountains of Samaria” — the capital of the ten tribes of Israel — are on a much lower level than those among the Philistines or the Egyptians. That is the idea. They would see the “great tumults”, the unrest, everything that goes wrong “in the midst thereof”. They would also see “the oppressed in the midst thereof” — those crushed in the very heart of Samaria’s society. Where there are oppressed ones, there is no real “living together”, and no real cooperation either. People are living apart, each for himself.

Amos 3:10–11

For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.¹¹ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

It is all about material gain — about accumulating wealth. There is no care for one another. The only topic of conversation among those “who store up” is their treasure — and they gather that treasure “by violence and robbery”, by plundering others in one form or another. Verse 11 states that therefore this wealth will be taken away. Riches are unstable. They are doubtful, insecure. One incident, and the stock market in China collapses; then America’s follows, and Amsterdam goes down with it. What remains of money then? In reality it is hot air. In any case, as the following chapters show as well, these social abuses are truly a thorn in the Lord’s side.

Amos 3:12

Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

But what is actually saved in this picture? Not the animal, in any case. The animal becomes the lion’s prey. “So shall the children of Israel be taken out” means that in reality they are

not saved — except for a few believers, a remnant. That is the thought behind “the children of Israel ... that dwell ...”. “Dwell” here has the sense of “recline” or “rest”.

The “couch” is similar to a bed; people are not exactly sure what sort of piece of furniture is meant, but you can picture a bed — and therefore comfort and rest. Those who are addressed here are people who think everything is going wonderfully, but the Lord says: no, I am going to change that. It will not go on like this.

Amos 3:13–15

Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,¹⁴ That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.¹⁵ And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

“And I will smite the winter house with the summer house” refers to those palaces in Samaria. The “houses of ivory” — ivory-panelled houses — “shall perish”: that is an expression of luxury and wealth that will disappear. “And the great houses shall have an end.” The LORD announces that He Himself will bring destruction upon the land. This literally came to pass at that time, in connection with the deportation into Assyrian exile. What applies to Judah (the two tribes) also applies to the ten tribes. The prophecies concerning Judah were fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and then led the Jewish people away into Babylonian exile. Those same prophecies will yet be fulfilled once more in the future. That means that similar statements regarding the ten tribes of Israel will likewise be fulfilled in due course.

The problem, however, is that, in the course of history, people have explained the ten tribes away as if they no longer existed, or hardly at all. But those peoples must be somewhere; they have not vanished from the earth. They will not suddenly pop up out of nowhere in the days of Christ’s return. They have lived somewhere all this time. The description of an unbelieving Jewish state in the days of Jeremiah fits just as well the unbelieving Jewish state of our own day. And likewise, the description here of the ten tribes in a godless condition applies just as well to the ten tribes in the days of Christ’s return. First the Church — the remnant — is taken out from among the ten tribes, so that afterwards the judgement will come upon those left behind. Upon the whole Western world, in other words.

We may think, in all sincerity, that Western culture is the best in the world, but what matters is not the standards we use — it is the standards God uses. And that implies judgement upon social wrongs, about which more will be said later.

It also means judgement upon religion, as verse 14 makes clear through “the altars of Bethel” — that is a reference back to the worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32). “The horns of the altar” correspond to a kind of sanctuary, a place of asylum. The idea is that one can appeal to religion and thereby be safe from the state. That is rather naïve, because the separation of religion and state is a thoroughly modern notion.

Those horns “shall be cut off”, and here it is therefore about judgement upon religion. I never quite know where the line lies between religion and ordinary life in society. We are used to the idea that they are two separate things, but in reality, of course, they are not. Religion consists of laws and ordinances for daily life. There is no clear boundary between

what is required for religious reasons — and therefore imposed — and what people might do in practice independently of that religion. The boundary is vague. It is the same in our society. The famous “values and norms” of old-fashioned English life are derived from the Bible, from Christianity, and especially from the Church. Only, people have let go of Christ and the Bible, while still professing, at least in words, to hold to those same values and norms — things like love of neighbour and care for one another, and so on.

The entire humanist movement is, in fact, borrowed from the Bible — but only after Christ has first been removed from it. Humanism is a kind of monstrosity — malformed with serious defects — and really cannot exist in its own right. I believe it is a demonic ideal, and that the devil keeps it going for a time. For the devil is not primarily out to destroy mankind, as many people think. He wants to preserve humanity, to bring happiness and prosperity — but without Christ. If that proves impossible, then destruction it is. But his preference is for a kingdom of peace on earth, just not under the rule of Christ, of course. Humanism can play an important role in that ideal. Because judgement comes upon the injustices of society as such, that same judgement will likewise fall upon religion. In this book of Amos — as we shall see later — it is repeatedly pointed out that on the one hand there is grave injustice, including in the courts and in everyday life, and on the other hand that this does not prevent people from being religious, even very religious, while, in fact, the two things are in direct conflict. On the one hand they commit injustice, and they know it; on the other hand they have a religion that demands a great deal of them, one on which they pride themselves and to which they appeal.

It is their calling card to the outside world, but at the same time it serves as a covering for the flesh — “an occasion to the flesh,” as Paul says in another context in Galatians 5:13.

They are basically saying: Look how religious we are, with our temples, our tithes that we pay, and our sacrifices that we bring from morning to night. But that is the subject of the next passage, chapter 4.

In any case, it is good for us to realise that there are prophecies which still have to be fulfilled in the future — in the near future, in fact. Modern views of this prophecy of Amos, sadly, explain everything away into the past — into 722 B.C., when the ten tribes were carried away into exile. That, people think, is the end of the matter. And after that, you effectively have no use for this book at all. It fulfilled its function some 2,500 years ago, and that was that.

In the same way, the prophecies concerning the Jewish people are reasoned away. They are said to have been fulfilled in the exile, and the prophecies of restoration are said to have been fulfilled in the return from Babylon. But what, then, is said of the prophecies that speak of the restoration of the ten tribes?

The prevailing view — I mean the common dispensationalist view — is that the ten tribes returned in the past, that it was a very small group who merged with the Jews and have since lived as Jews. I am sorry to say it, but that is absolutely absurd. Why does one wish to believe that? There is not the slightest evidence for it. Or is there? Well yes: for if one does not believe that, the consequence is that all these prophecies — and there are many more beyond those in Amos — concerning the ten tribes of Israel and Samaria still have to be fulfilled, just like the prophecies concerning the Jews. But in fact there is no other option. The Bible speaks of a great people, with corresponding abuses, concerning whom the Lord says: I will not allow it to continue like this. Paul says about this that if the wild olive

branches, which have been grafted into the good olive tree, do not continue in faith, they too will be cut off (Romans 11:17–24). When the “natural branches” were broken off, in that earlier time, that was God’s judgement upon the two tribes. If the “wild branches” are cut off, it can only be in the future. Then it will likewise be God’s judgement upon that people — those peoples. Precisely because they are Israelite in origin, the Lord will bring judgement upon them for the same reasons as He will bring judgement upon the Jews. The two together in the first place, because He will establish His kingdom on earth via those two and the ten tribes — via “the tribes of Israel”, via “the house of Jacob” (verse 13).

Amos 4:1–3

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.² The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.³ And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

In the first three verses the women in Israel are addressed — and not exactly in flattering terms. They are called “kine of Bashan”, cows of Bashan. Those were very well-fed animals; I picture fat cows. They are presented as those who in reality, at least to a great extent, are responsible for the course of affairs in the land. You might expect that the men would be held responsible for these abuses, but here it is the women who are addressed.

“Ye ... that are in the mountain of Samaria” means: inhabitants of Samaria — first of all the city, and from there the whole land. The whole people, designated here by the name of the capital, “Samaria”. To “crush” is the same as to “oppress”. And “the poor” are “the needy”, and conversely.

These women of Samaria say to “their masters” — that is, their own husbands; it really ought to read “your masters”. That is indeed how the newer translations renders it: “who say to your lords, Bring, that we may drink!” Those men are being ordered about, while the women oppress the poor and are only interested in their own pleasure. That is the gist of it. Their husbands are harnessed to that wagon, each woman individually, for the Hebrew form “Bring!” is singular.

Verse 2: a “hook” is a barb, and a barb is a hook. The thought is repeated. They are taken like fish on a hook “in the days ... that he will take you away”. A fish is caught to be eaten; it costs the animal its life. That is clearly the idea here as well. “Ye shall go out at the breaches” refers to the gaps that have been made in the wall of Samaria by the enemy. The thought is that there are so many breaches in the wall that there is one near to everyone. The wall is riddled. Not just a gap here and there; the wall has been systematically smashed.

The KJV has: “and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.” The underlying Hebrew is difficult; The alternative understanding, which I find more likely, is roughly: “and you shall be driven out, not towards the palace.” That is, not into the palace, but away to “Har-harmon” — probably Mount Hermon in the north. There each one, after going out through the breach, would be “dragged away”, or “led away”, or “cast out”. In any case, that is the end of that short section — only three verses — and then from verse 4 the people as a whole are addressed again.

Amos 4:4–5

Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

Bethel and Gilgal are places, but what is called “come” in the one case is called “transgress” in the other. In other words, it is more than merely coming; one does something there — one “transgresses”. Namely, one transgresses “the law of the LORD”, or more generally, the “Word of the LORD”.

The “Gilgal” mentioned here is probably not the Gilgal by the Jordan, roughly opposite Jericho. Typologically it is the same: it is called Gilgal, so it is Gilgal in that symbolic sense. But if you look it up on the map, this Gilgal appears to be a place near Shechem, which is not the same. The same applies to Bethel: the original Bethel is one thing; the later cultic centre called by that name is another.

Apparently, Bethel and Gilgal had become religious centres — with altars, sanctuaries, temples. At the division of the twelve-tribe kingdom, Jeroboam immediately established two holy sites: one was Bethel, the other Dan in the far north. Gilgal evidently also functioned as such, and Beersheba as well, for one reason or another — which is strange, because it lay in the far south and was not part of the territory of the ten tribes.

But “from Dan to Beersheba” means the whole land, from north to south.

Hence the Jewish joke that a man who goes farther south than Beersheba no longer needs to keep the law. He goes to Eilat, and there he is “free” and can do as he pleases. Then he no longer needs to keep the law. The truly orthodox, of course, pay no attention to that.

This verse is about religion practised in places, and therefore under circumstances, that people themselves have chosen. That was not according to the will of the LORD. He says, “bring your sacrifices” — not “My sacrifices”, but “your sacrifices” — “every morning, and your tithes after three years.” The English text had “every three days”, but the KJV correctly reads “after three years”. In any case, the point is that it is their religion, not His.

To “offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven” is something the Lord had never asked for. They brought before the LORD what He had not requested, namely “freewill offerings” — which, in this context, we might call “self-willed offerings”, because it is a religion they have invented for themselves. They even “proclaim and publish” them — they advertise how religious they are. Followed by the Lord GOD’s verdict: “for this liketh you” — not “this liketh Me.” They were plainly not concerned with what the LORD would have liked...

The consequence is this:

Amos 4:6

And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

“Cleanness of teeth” means hunger, as the following phrase makes clear — they had nothing to eat. The Lord had brought famine upon them, and judgements of various kinds. If you know what things are like among the ten tribes in our own day, you will also have some idea of how things were among the ten tribes then. People believe that the Lord is obliged to take care of them; and if He apparently does not, they hold it very much against

Him — perhaps even questioning His very existence. “If He is God, why does He not give us anything to eat?” But they are not interested in the answer. The answer is that man does not wish to serve Him — and that is what those days and our own have in common.

What is the purpose of human existence? According to Paul:

Acts 17:27–28a

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; ...

If people do not do this, what right to existence do they have? And if they have no right to existence, why should the Lord then care for them? It is very simple, and Scripture is clear enough about it. People may say: “But I am religious, am I not?” Yes — but that is not what was asked for.

Under the Mosaic covenant things were arranged more or less like this: if the people served the Lord, He would in due time give them everything they needed — at the very least, the rain, and thereby their food. He would also ensure that the enemy would not invade the land, and so on.

On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) in 1973, Israel was attacked by many countries at once. That ought to make one think, at the very least, for the Lord had said that He would ensure that they would not be attacked on the feast days.

Editorial note 2024: The 2023 attack by Hamas on targets in Israel took place on the feast day Simchat Torah, exactly fifty years and one day after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war on 6 October 1973.

The Lord says that He had brought hunger upon them “in all your places”, and He then concludes: “yet have ye not returned unto me.” It ought to have been a reason to turn to Him — just as with the other things mentioned in the following verses, which the Lord brought upon the people.

Amos 4:7–8

And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.⁸ So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The withholding and giving of rain took place in a very demonstrative way on God’s part. Three months before harvest the rain normally ceases anyway, but if it has already been held back, the harvest fails. The people were forced to travel from place to place to get water. Even then they did not receive enough, because there simply was not sufficient water. And still ... “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.”

Amos 4:9

I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

The corn was burned up, that is the idea; and “mildew” is a disease of the grain. These are natural disasters – but the whole point is: they come from God!

And again Scripture adds: “yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.” You would expect them to do exactly that. They are dependent on the Lord; He alone can do something about natural disasters. And then there are people who seize precisely such circumstances as an excuse to question the existence of God, His power and His grace. In that case, of course, things will never improve. I can only imagine someone doing that because he wants to be rid of that God, and will seize any pretext to dispute His existence, to cast doubt upon it, or otherwise rid himself of Him.

But normally you would cry out to that God – certainly in Israel’s situation, to whom the Word of God had been entrusted, and to whom God had given promises, under the Old Covenant and – earlier still, to Abraham – under a New Covenant.

Amos 4:10

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

They ought to have known this – that Egypt had once been struck in this way shortly before the exodus. If Egypt was struck, and now Israel is struck in the same way, there is something fundamentally wrong with Israel.

The LORD “sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt”, He “slew your young men with the sword and took away your horses”, i.e. by means of warfare. Read the book of Judges and you will know enough. They smelled the stench of the corpses; yet even that did not cause them to change their ways. “Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.” On the one hand we naturally think, with such things, first of all of the State of Israel. From all sides it is – and has been – threatened. My solution would be: the nation ought to turn to the Lord.

And as far as the ten tribes are concerned, that is moving in the same direction. Threatened from outside and from within.

Amos 4:11

I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

“To overthrow” means to bring about a turning, a total change. In practice it means “to destroy”. It can have various applications; in another context it may mean “to cleanse” – in the New Testament you find the expression (coming via the Greek from the Hebrew) that a house is “swept” with brooms (Luke 11:25). But the basic idea is: bringing about a change, a turning – that is the polite way of putting it. In reality it means to destroy, to ruin. What was there disappears. That is exactly what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah; the verse itself mentions them here.

Sodom and Gomorrah, however, were not plucked out of the fire. Only Lot was – and he is a picture of Israel in general, and of the Jewish people in particular; and even more specifically that is Lot's wife. In the pillar of salt that is now pointed out near Sodom, you can see what remains of Judaism: it is stone-dead. You recognise the salt. That monument, that pillar, that salt, that dead Judaism, is a memorial to the past, to the working of the Word of God. Sodom and Gomorrah are referred to many times in the Bible as the great example of God's judgement. That is exactly why people try to play down that judgement. In reality it was a gigantic judgement, and the traces of it are still visible today – not only literal traces of Sodom and Gomorrah, but in the whole Jordan valley with everything connected to it (Jericho, the lowest city on earth, among others), including the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and so on.

But here it is said of Israel that they were plucked out of that fire. In many situations, including in this history, that has happened. Many judgements of God have come upon the nation, yet there has always been a remnant left.

But verse 11 again ends with: "yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD." Those are words you can read all the way through to the book of Revelation.

Amos 4:12–13

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.¹³ For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

It is about "meeting thy God", and that in connection with judgement. Prepare yourself for judgement, because it is going to happen. God says: all this is still temporary, but the day will come when there will be a definitive judgement. For this people that meant that it would be carried away into Assyrian captivity.

In verse 13 the LORD presents Himself as the One who will indeed judge and who has all power in heaven and on earth – that is more or less what the verse says. And it is God who makes His thoughts known to man – i.e. God's thoughts. That is what God does: He makes Himself known.

Then it says that He "maketh the morning darkness". Morning is light – He can put the light out, so to speak.

The "high places of the earth" may also have to do with the fact that He will bring down that which is high, as we read elsewhere (for example Isaiah 25:11). Otherwise it is a rather vague expression. Everything that is exalted will be humbled by God.

Verses 12 and 13 speak of the fact that God will judge – with a short view towards the Assyrian captivity, and a very long view towards the final judgement "on the Last Day", as we solemnly call it.

The next chapter deals with that – and it starts, just like chapter 4, with "Hear this word ...".

Amos 5:1–2

Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.² The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

Chapter 5 begins with a lament over the final downfall of this ten-tribe kingdom – “the virgin of Israel is fallen”. That naturally means that she **shall** fall; but Amos virtually sees it already and takes up this lamentation over “the virgin of Israel”.

“She shall no more rise” has nothing to do with rising “on the Last Day” or anything like that. It simply means that this kingdom will be brought to an end and will not be restored. And that has never happened. Verse 2 therefore says the same twice: she is fallen – that is, forsaken – and she will not rise again. There is no one to raise her up; the Lord certainly will not

Amos 5:3–5

For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.⁴ For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:⁵ But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.

“Decimation” is the word for what is described in verse 3: a tenth is left. There will be a remnant, but apparently not in the land itself.

Man is called to seek the Lord, who allows Himself to be found and who “is not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27). That is what life is about: to seek Him. Not merely that one should seek Him once and then be done – that is the evangelical version of Alzheimer’s – but that one should seek the Lord throughout one’s life. That is, to orient oneself towards Him, to serve Him. He would then, from His place, see to it that He cares for those who serve Him. “Seek ye me, and ye shall live”: literally live, in practice. They were to seek the LORD, and **not** Bethel, where one of those temples (altars) had been built. This looks back to chapter 4:4. This time it also says, “and pass not to Beersheba”. “Pass over to” is the idea. The hint is probably that they would have to cross the border, because Beersheba lay in the two-tribe kingdom, right in the south. It suggests that there, too, an altar had been set up, but that is not recorded. “From Dan to Beersheba” is the phrase for the whole country – all Israel from north to south. Gilgal “shall surely go into captivity”, that is, into exile. The Hebrew word for “exile” is *galoet*, from the same root as “Gilgal”. And “Bethel shall come to nought” – “Bethel”, the “house of God”, will no longer exist.

Amos 5:6–7

Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.⁷ Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

After “Seek the LORD, and ye shall live”, the phrase “the house of Joseph” is introduced. It is not “the house of Israel” this time, although that is what it is – but it is one of the two houses of Israel. It refers specifically to Joseph and thus to the ten tribes of Israel. Here there is at least a suggestion that perhaps part of this people might yet seek the LORD and find Him. That is why I find it striking that such expressions are taken up by the apostle Paul in

the New Testament – there we are indeed in Joseph’s territory and in the story of the ten tribes, among whom the Gospel did in fact arrive.

“Seek the LORD, and ye shall live” is addressed to those (verse 7) “who turn judgment to wormwood”. “Judgement” means, in the first place, the Word of God and service to God. Instead of serving God, they produce bitterness. “Wormwood” means bitterness; it is a solemn expression for death. If the water is bitter, you die from it; it must be healed – either by throwing a piece of wood into it (Exodus 15:23–25) or by throwing salt into it (2 Kings 2:21–22).

Amos 5:8

Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

Verse 8 speaks of God as Creator of heaven and earth, and as the One who sustains those things. Some are still willing to acknowledge God as Creator – that He once created everything and then went to rest. They rarely say “rest”; they say “to have a rest”, as though He were exhausted. I once literally heard a theologian say that God went to “rest” on the seventh day and afterwards went to do something else. But he has not understood what “resting” is. It means simply “to cease from one’s works”. Resting is something else: recuperating one’s strength – and that is not what Scripture says God did.

Amos 5:9

That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

God is the One who judges, and who thereby “strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong”, so destruction weakens the fortress and the strong. Why should He not? That is very understandable. Day in, day out, God is provoked by unbelieving people who contradict Him, and even claim that He does not exist at all – despite everything He has brought about, done and said throughout history.

His Name is still blasphemed. He will put an end to that one day, and then it is finished. That is what is being said here: judgement upon the strong, upon this people, upon this land.

I remind you that all this took place in the **best** years of this land economically – and in many other respects. They felt strong. But the Lord says: I will bring judgement.

Amos 5:10

They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

Already in those days they themselves decided what was right, and so the Lord says: “They hate him that rebuketh in the gate” – and the gate is precisely the place where judgement, where **justice**, should be administered. But they take no delight in justice; they prefer injustice.

“Judgement” is not only a legal term; it has everything to do with truth. The ideal of justice is to uncover the truth. It is about the discovery of truth. Yet in many cases people have no interest in the truth and therefore none in justice. The concern is purely practical: the pursuit of one’s own aims. The very notion of truth in an absolute sense has long since been disposed of – in our western culture as well.

Is it not like that in our society? Truth must not be heard. Through “the courts”, through the state, it is determined what is truth and what is not, and what may or may not be said. I shall not go into detail, but that is how it works in practice.

Amos 5:11–12

Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.¹² For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

“Dwelling” means “remaining”. If you do not understand the sense of “dwelling”, just substitute “remain”, and vice versa. That is what you do here too: “ye shall not dwell in them” = you shall not remain there.

Much has been built – among other things vineyards – but when there should be fruit, it all goes the other way. They are told that they will not remain in the land to enjoy what they have produced. For the Lord knows their many transgressions and sins – for example that “they take a bribe” (“ransom money”, “hush money”) and “turn aside the poor in the gate from their right”. With bribes things are smoothed over, and justice is determined by the shifting of money. That is widely accepted. You pay so much and you will not be prosecuted. Our traffic fines work in much the same way.

Amos 5:13

Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

“The prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.”

This belongs in the category of sayings from Ecclesiastes: “Be not righteous over much ... why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” (Ecclesiastes 7:16). And in verse 17 it immediately adds: “Be not over much wicked.” Then verse 20 concludes: “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.”

Do not try to be more righteous than the pope. Do not try to push your right to the utmost; that right simply does not exist here, you will not get it, it is not to be found here – so do not pursue it. Those are wrong ideals; they lead nowhere.

Amos 5:14

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

They should seek the good and not the evil, “that ye may live”. The evil is not to be fought head-on – that is pointless – but the good is to be cleaved to, so that one may have life and “the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.” It is not a mechanical law of cause and effect, as though we practised a certain technique – “we seek the good and then things will automatically go well.” Rather: we seek the good and then the Lord cares for us. It is not a mere principle; it is a promise from God. He would do that.

The LORD is “the God of hosts”. In Amos 4:13 we read: “The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.” In Hebrew: Jehovah Zebaoth. “God of hosts” literally means “God of multitudes”, because God is not a God of the Jews alone or of Israel alone, but also of the nations. These “hosts” are the nations, as becomes clear when you trace the expression through Scripture. As soon as exile is in view, you find the title “LORD of hosts”. It implies that even when they have been scattered among the nations by God, they can still find the LORD among those nations.

The New Testament says: “Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also” (Romans 3:29). What God has promised is not only for Israel; in principle it is for all nations. Israel does have a special responsibility among the nations. The salvation of individuals is based on individual faith in God and His Word, and therefore in the Lord Jesus Christ. When that living faith is present in practice, then we can say: “the God of hosts shall be with you”. People say, “The Lord be with you”, but that is only under this condition.

Amos 5:15

Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Where decisions are made – “in the gate” – people are to submit to that divine right. Then, perhaps, “the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” It is sometimes said that Amos still hoped that, in his own days, this judgement might not actually take place. If only they would immediately do as God said, and so on. But I do not think these words have anything to do with the days in which they were spoken. The verse speaks of the remnant of Joseph, not the remnant of Israel. That is, it speaks only of a remnant from the ten tribes. It is also striking that it does not say “the LORD, the God of Israel”.

With hindsight – which is always easy – you can see in the verse that the remnant of Joseph is apparently reckoned among the nations. It speaks specifically of Joseph, of a remnant out of Joseph. Exactly as in Jeremiah 31, where the New Covenant is announced to the ten and the two tribes. In the first part of Jeremiah 31 great emphasis is laid, via Ephraim, on Joseph and on Samaria – verses that speak exclusively of the ten tribes of Israel, of what remains of them in exile.

If, in exile, they hated the evil and loved the good, the Lord would perhaps be gracious to them. When, in exile, the Gospel was preached to them, they did love the good and hate the evil. Then the Lord was gracious to the remnant of Joseph. Instead of the people continuing to walk in darkness, light rose upon them (Isaiah 9:1).

Amos 5:16

Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

Then we read that “wailing shall be in all streets”. They had no reason to wail – things were going well economically and in many other respects – but the Lord would teach them. They will, in the end, become “skilful of lamentation”. They will gain experience in these things, and everyone will mourn with them. It is not just about the city; the “husbandman”, the farmer, is mentioned as well – in other words the entire people, as the context makes clear.

Amos 5:17

And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.

The vineyard is supposed to be a place where there is no wailing, but joy. Yet here we read: “in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.” At the exodus the Lord passed through Egypt to smite all the firstborn (Exodus 12:12). It is therefore not a good sign when the Lord “passes through”. His passing through is the bringing of judgement.

Amos 5:18

Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

The phrase “the day of the LORD” is a fixed expression. It most certainly does **not** mean Sunday, as is sometimes thought and taught. That is not its meaning in the Bible. The word “day” here has the sense of judgement. A “day” is light; bringing things to light is the work of the court. It is about discovering the truth, and then issuing a decision. Scripture says: “the day shall declare it” (1 Corinthians 3:13). In 1 Corinthians 4:3 the word “judgement” is the same Greek word that elsewhere is translated “day”. “Day” is light as opposed to darkness, and therefore it has to do with judgement. It has nothing to do with time as such. The “day of Christ” (Philippians 1:10; 2:16) has nothing to do with time either. It is our appearance (of believers of this dispensation) before the judgement seat of Christ. The “day of the LORD” is “the day of Jehovah”, and refers not to the Church but to God’s judgement over the nations, with the Name Jehovah as His Name in relation to the nations, to mankind in general. In His return the God who reveals Himself to man in a form and with the Name Jehovah will appear. We usually call that “the second coming of Christ”. Then He will finally put things right after six thousand years. That is “the judgement of Jehovah”, “the day of the LORD”, God’s judgement on humanity. Scripture also speaks of “the day of God”. That is the judgement on the Last Day, God’s judgement upon the whole creation. It is the only time that expression appears in connection with the heavens and the earth burning and melting (2 Peter 3:23).

So there are three “days”, but essentially they are the same thing viewed from three different angles, and in chronological order:

1. First, the “day of Christ”, in connection with the Church.
2. Then, the “day of the LORD” (Jehovah), in connection with the nations, beginning with and including Israel.
3. Finally, the “day of God”, that is the Last Day, “at the last day” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54) – the final judgement.

Apparently here there is expectation of the Messiah. Amos is saying, in effect: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD!”

We are near the end of the ten-tribe kingdom. The concept of “the day of the LORD” must by then have been fairly well known. If people “desire the day of the LORD”, they are looking for the coming of the Lord, and therefore the coming of the Messiah, to establish His kingdom, to restore the throne of David, to make the two peoples one again. You find that idea in Ezekiel (although that book had not yet been written in Amos’s day), but the thought is already present in the Psalms, most of which had already been written.

The word “desire” shows that it is about wanting the Messiah for themselves – for their own benefit. Not simply “awaiting” Him, but “desiring” Him, to enjoy the fruits of His coming. Amos says: there will be no fruit for you to enjoy when the Lord comes. What will that “day” bring? Darkness and not light. Light represents what is good; darkness represents what is evil.

After this, Amos uses some rather striking imagery.

Amos 5:19–20

“As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. ... Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?”

A man flees from a lion – he actually manages to escape – and then a bear comes along. Or he finally reaches a house, thinks he is safe, leans his hand against the wall ... and a snake bites him.

The point is: people think they are escaping something, but what follows is worse. When the Lord comes, one may perhaps be delivered from present misery, but the judgement that then comes upon you will be far more terrible.

Verse 20 simply repeats the statement of verse 18: the day of the LORD will be darkness and no light. You get the impression that even before Amos’ time this expression “the day of the LORD” was already fairly well known among the people – by now it is certainly long established as the name for the judgement the Lord will bring at His return.

Amos 5:21–22

(KJV excerpt) “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them...”

It is not “a sweet savour unto the LORD” – although that was the intention of the sacrifices. The Lord says, in effect: it stinks. He has “no delight in them” and does not even want to look at them.

This is not being said about the feasts of the Jews (the two-tribe kingdom), but about the feasts of the ten tribes of Israel. They did indeed have feast days and “set times” similar to those of Judah, based on the law of Moses, but they had altered them and shifted them, since they could not go up to Jerusalem.

They had invented their own feast in place of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement – and that under the invocation of the Name of Jehovah. It was self-chosen religion, loosely inspired by Mosaic ordinances, but that is as far as it went.

In exactly the same way, our modern Christian tradition or culture may historically have a biblical background – but that lies a very long way back. Whether the Lord takes delight in it ... I put it politely when I say: I doubt it.

What profit is there, for instance, in celebrating Easter if one does not actually believe in the resurrection of Christ? Then one goes to the St Matthew Passion, because “that is our culture”. Well – that is what is being described here.

And that brings us to verses 23 and 24.

Amos 5:23–24

(KJV excerpt) “Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

A “mighty stream” is not a wadi that usually lies dry, but a river that has water in it all the time. The thought is: this music pours out, flows forth – but the Lord would rather see justice flowing out and spreading everywhere.

As water runs its course, so should justice be brought forth. With the Lord it is about right – and by “right” we are to think certainly of “upholding the law”, but first and foremost “law” is the Word of God.

What is happening here is that they bring burnt offerings and meat offerings, and all sorts of “culture” as well – but the primary intention is **not** that we should bring something to God. The intention is that we should **receive** something from God. James says: “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” (James 1:19) We should listen to God rather than speak to Him. Speaking to Him is very popular; listening to Him is what is not happening – and that is exactly what is said here.

The Lord says: I do not like this at all, to put it mildly. What I desire is that you listen to Me and put that into practice – that is a sweet savour to Me.

Paul puts it like this (I’ll just cite key fragments):

“...God ... maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ ...” (2 Corinthians 2:14–15)

We are “a sweet savour of Christ unto God” because the Word of God is preached, and thus righteousness – the right of God – is revealed. That is the gospel.

Amos 5:25–26

“Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.”

We do not actually know what the answer to this rhetorical question should be. It may well be that they did not – or hardly ever – bring sacrifices and offerings in those forty years, except on certain occasions.

Verse 26 says that in those forty years in the wilderness they certainly served other, selfmade gods.

In Isaiah the making of idols is described in a very vivid and also cynical way: the craftsman cuts down a tree, uses part of it to make a fire, warms himself and bakes bread with it – and from the rest he carves a god, before which he then bows down and prays: “Deliver me; for thou art my god.”

By doing this they certainly undermined the service of Jehovah, who is the **only** God.

Scripture has Him say: “Beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 45:5), and that is exactly the point here. How can one serve **Him** while at the same time acknowledging other gods beside Him? Fundamentally, that is completely impossible. It is contrary to reason. I think that is the background here.

Who is “Chiun” or “Kewan”? In any case it is a reference to other gods. It appears to be a name for Saturn – and I think “Saturnus” is simply “Satanus”, a corrupted form. Chiun / Kewan, for whom they made images, is then called “the star of your god” – which again points to Saturn. The idea is simply that they were carrying other gods along with them. And if this is Saturn – indeed twice over – then we know very well who is behind it.

In the end it does not matter which god it is supposed to be: it is always the devil. The idols are demons, and demons are the staff of Satan. What the heathen sacrifice to idols, they sacrifice to demons; they are not gods at all, though men acknowledge them as such. They are “unclean spirits” – and through them you always end up at Satan, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

So they served other “gods” alongside the LORD. The Lord is, in effect, saying: this is not going anywhere – I am going to put an end to it.

Amos 5:27

“Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.”

The LORD Himself, under the Name “God of hosts”, would lead them into prison – i.e. into exile. “Beyond Damascus” – they had already passed by Damascus once on the way into the land; now they would pass that way again, but this time to disappear beyond it.

They would be taken back into Mesopotamia, the land between the two rivers. That is where Israel originally came from. Abraham, their forefather, came from Ur of the Chaldees, near the city of Babel. There, after the Davidic kingship was brought to an end by the exile, royal authority over Jerusalem was effectively handed over.

Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon in those days. The reason he was able to build a world empire in such a short time is very simple: the LORD was with him. That is also why the list of world empires in the book of Daniel begins with Babylon – and why it also ends with Babylon.

When judgement comes upon the nations of the earth, it is ultimately, in the highest sense, judgement upon Babylon – literally so.

And here again we find the expression: “saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.” Whenever the Lord speaks thus to Israel, it is in fact a threat.

Here the fall of the ten-tribe kingdom is announced. In my understanding, this is done under the heading of “the day of the LORD” – but that day certainly did not yet begin in the time of the Assyrian empire. So this announcement of the fall of the ten tribes looks beyond that first fall to days that still lie ahead of us – the days of the return of Christ. It concerns the time when the ten tribes must still officially come to faith, just as this will also be the case for the two tribes.

For the Jews, only a remnant is preserved – and for the ten tribes likewise. That remnant is not the present Church, for by then the “rapture of the Church” will already have taken place. Immediately thereafter you have the unbelieving two tribes – the Jewish state – but also the unbelieving ten tribes, since any believers among them will likewise have been caught up.

The whole story starts again from the beginning, as it were. It is as though the gospel must be preached all over again right from the very start – and so it is.

First by the two witnesses in the seventieth week of Daniel, in Jerusalem; and after that, by believers from among the Jews, I assume, to the ten tribes of Israel. The result will be a remnant – and from that remnant the 144,000 will be sealed as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel over the whole earth (Revelation 7:4; 14:1, 3). All of this belongs to “the day of the LORD”, which – from the appearing of the Lord on the Mount of Olives and the destruction of Jerusalem to the fall of Babylon – spans thirty-three years.

Amos 6:1

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

“Those who are at ease in Zion” is parallel to “them that trust in the mountain of Samaria”. “Zion” thus represents the **two** tribes; “Samaria” represents the **ten** tribes. Both are full of self-confidence; they feel safe and secure. Nothing can happen; everything is going well.

Those “which are named chief of the nations” are apparently the leaders of these two kingdoms; hence the phrase “to whom the house of Israel came”. Israel has the right of the firstborn among the nations of the earth – but that is on the basis of faith. Israel is the son of the LORD (see Exodus 4) and has been chosen by God for this right of the firstborn among the nations, so that the kingdom God will build will be an Israelite kingdom.

That made the Israelites a nation of kings, and also a nation of priests – for it was to be a royal priesthood and as such stand at the head of all religion.

Amos 6:2

²Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

Calneh and Hamath both lie in the north, outside the land. Calneh is in northern Syria; Hamath lies in the north of Mesopotamia. In those days they were fairly large cities.

“Gath of the Philistines” is to the south.

They are told to look at these three cities and ask whether they are better than the two kingdoms of Zion and Samaria – the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. The question whether “their border is greater than your border” probably has to do with whether there is any real difference. The thought seems to be that Israel should reach the conclusion that, in fact, it is not so impressive. Whether Israel is smaller or larger than these other kingdoms, it can certainly be compared with them – and the supposedly “foremost” position of Israel as firstborn in practice means very little. Therefore the Israelites have no reason at all to feel so safe among those other cities and kingdoms. There is no cause for complacency, for from the north the enemy will come – Assyria, though that name never appears in Amos.

Amos 6:3

Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

They push that evil day far into the future: “that will not come for a very long time”. At that moment they were not entirely wrong – but judgement would already come **before** that “evil day”, that “day of the LORD”, arrived. Not two thousand years after Christ, but about seven hundred and twenty years before Christ. That makes quite a difference. The “seat of violence” refers to their own system of justice – not God’s, but their own. That justice, as chapter 5 has already shown, is corrupt: it is in reality **violence** and injustice. God’s day of justice they push far away; their own corrupt “justice” they bring near and make present.

Amos 6:4–5

That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;⁵ That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

“Ivory beds” and “couches” (the word can mean couches or divans) speak of luxury and refinement.

“They eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall”: the classic commentaries note that they ate meat every day, whereas normally one would only eat meat on Sabbaths and feast days. Scripture presents that as decadence. “To chant” – literally: to tinkle, to improvise – on the sound of the harp, and to devise instruments of music “like David”: they imagine that they are on David’s level. They imitate David, but in reality it does not come close.

It is all meant negatively, yet culturally it is impressive – artistic and creative. But the Lord says: what use is it to Me? If you do not listen to Me, it is all empty.

Amos 6:6

That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

The “bowls” may be vessels that were also used in worship – it is hard to be sure. I think the point is that they drink wine from large bowls: in other words in great quantity. To “anoint themselves with the chief ointments” suggests using the best oil in unusually large amounts. So they drink wine in large quantities and lavish oil on themselves in large quantities.

We see the same in our own day. It is presented here as a picture of excess, luxury, and with that a sense of security and ease (compare verse 1).

“But they are not grieved for the affliction (literally: the breaking) of Joseph.” They are unconcerned about the ruin of Joseph. This misuse, described here in detail, is seen by the Lord as a sign of moral decay. They are concerned only with outward things – appearances and what can be seen. Inwardly, nothing is sound, and such a people goes to ruin.

History shows the same pattern. The Roman Empire collapsed in exactly that way: built by the sword, but eventually destroyed by decadence. And so it goes with all so-called civilisations. They rise, they flourish, and then the tide turns. They become too large, lose substance, become all show, and finally implode.

That is what is being announced here over the ten-tribe kingdom – both in the past and again in the future; and that future is no longer far away.

Amos 6:7

Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The “now” here is not a time marker so much as a logical conclusion: **therefore**, given all this, this is what must follow.

The whole people will go into captivity, but the leaders (the rich, the prominent) will go at the head of the procession to their doom. When the people are led into exile, that will be the end of the banqueting and the feasting.

Amos 6:8

“The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself ... I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.”

Because there is none higher than He, the Lord GOD swears by Himself. He declares that He abhors “the excellency” – literally the **pride** – of Jacob and hates his palaces. Joseph was the firstborn of Jacob; so “Jacob” here can very well refer specifically to the ten tribes.

Amos 6:9–10

And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.¹⁰ And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord.

These verses sketch a grim picture: if ten men are left in one house, they will die. A “near kinsman” – perhaps an uncle – comes to take up the bodies and burn them, in order to

carry the bones out of the house. Burning is the quickest and, in many cases, the wisest way because of the danger of infection.

As he removes the bones, he speaks to someone still deeper in the house: "Is there yet any with thee?" – in other words: "Is anyone still alive?" But that question is really not to be asked aloud.

"Hold thy tongue," he says; they were not people in whose case the Name of the LORD should even be mentioned. They did **not** serve the LORD – and they died as such. "Bones", "the bones", are in Scripture the last remnant of the body – shorthand for a corpse. The whole scene is one of almost total extinction, with the survivor hardly daring to answer.

Amos 6:11

For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts."

The LORD is about to give the command – that is the idea. He will strike both "the great house" and "the little house".

The modern translations says: "He will dash the great house to pieces and the small house to splinters." The thought is judgement on both houses: the "great house" is the ten-tribe kingdom; the "little house" is the two-tribe kingdom.

Amos 6:12

Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock." Horses do not run on a rock; they slip and fall.

"Will one plow there with oxen?" – yes, you plough land with oxen, that is what they are for. But if you read the Hebrew slightly differently (because the consonants run together), the phrase becomes: "Will one plough the sea with oxen?" In that case the answer to the second question is the same as to the first: obviously not.

From of old, in Scripture, bitterness is the same as poison – not because everything bitter is poisonous, but often enough it is, and no clear distinction is made. The word "turned" means "changed", "replaced". "Hemlock" and "gall" are virtually synonymous.

So the point is simple: it is completely unreasonable to think horses can run on a rock – they cannot. You cannot plough the sea with oxen. And you cannot turn justice into poison and still build a viable state upon it.

If you do so – if you imagine that with such a perverted "justice" you can build and maintain a land, a nation, a state – you are deluded. It is just as unreasonable as trying to make horses run on bare rock or oxen plough the sea. It cannot last; it cannot stand. Where there is no real justice, a country falls apart, becomes ungovernable, and cannot endure. Usually it then becomes prey to surrounding enemies, who are always lurking. Or, to put it the other way, you are prey and thus acquire enemies – just as in the animal world the weak become prey for predators.

In other words: this land looks impressive, but in reality it is weak. It may be rich and outwardly splendid, but inwardly it is collapsing – it cannot continue as it is. Before that collapse is complete, it will be conquered – in this case by Assyria.

Amos 6:13

Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

“You who rejoice in nothing” means that they are happy, confident, and feel secure, while in reality there is absolutely no basis for that feeling. There is nothing solid that undergirds their confidence.

The word “horns” here can carry the sense of glory, wealth, power, or prestige. They imagine that they have acquired all of this “by their own strength”.

Amos 6:14

But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness.

The nation which “the LORD, the God of hosts” would raise up against them is not named here either. The expression “they shall afflict you” means they will oppress or subdue them. Hamath was mentioned already in verse 2. It lies in the northern part of Mesopotamia and appears, in those days, to have been the northernmost limit—the widest territorial reach—of the kingdom of the ten tribes.

We are familiar with the expression “from Dan even to Beersheba” in relation to Israel: Dan being the northernmost city, Beersheba the southernmost. But the boundaries of the land have at times been both larger and smaller.

“Unto the river of the wilderness” may refer to the Wadi Araba, the extension of the Dead Sea to the south. North of the Dead Sea lies the Jordan River, flowing from north to south; south of the Dead Sea the Wadi Araba flows from south to north toward the Red Sea. That places us in the southernmost part of the land.

It may well refer to that region, for then the text has effectively named the land from north to south.

The whole land would be subjected—and so it came to pass historically.

Yet, beyond these historical events, we are confronted with the Day of the LORD, when the Lord will bring judgement upon the ten tribes of Israel.

I find reading these things astonishing. What, then, does the Lord have against them? What is wrong? And then one realises: this is precisely the condition of our own society today—with its self-invented religion. It faintly echoes Scripture or even Moses, but most know almost nothing of either. Alongside that, other things are placed on an equal footing with the Bible, or even above it.

Amos's 5 Visions

Amos's visions show that Israel's sin makes judgment unavoidable and inescapable—locust, fire, plumbline, rotten fruit, collapsing altar—but through the intercession of a mediator and God's own “repenting” (His act of bringing in something new), a small believing remnant is

preserved, leading ultimately to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom and blessing for Israel and the nations.

Together Amos's visions trace a line from imminent judgment → intercession and restraint → no more reprieve → total shaking → final restoration of David's kingdom. Here's a compact walk-through.

1. **Vision 1 – Locusts** (Amos 7:1–3)

Grasshoppers (locusts) eat up the “latter growth” after the king’s mowings.

- The locusts picture invading armies (as in Joel) that will devour the land— here, initially Assyria.
- It’s “after the king’s mowings” = final stage, the last growth, suggesting a decisive, finishing judgment.
- Before the devastation is completed, Amos intercedes: “O Lord GOD, forgive... by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.”
- The LORD “repents” (nacham) = He acts to change the situation, bringing in something new instead of letting total destruction go on:

“The LORD repented for this: It shall not be.”

- So: judgment is ready, but stopped because a mediator intercedes—Amos foreshadowing Christ. A remnant is spared.

2. **Vision 2 – Fire** (Amos 7:4–6)

A consuming fire devours even “the great deep” and a part of the land.

- Fire = intense judgment that reaches even the waters (the “deep”) and starts consuming the land.
- Again Amos pleads:

“O Lord GOD, cease... for he is small.”

- Again:

“The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be.”

- The principle is the same: God’s righteous judgment would wipe everything out, but because of a mediator, judgment is limited and a remnant survives.

3. **Vision 3 – The Plumbline** (Amos 7:7–9)

The LORD stands on a wall built by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.

- Plumbline = God’s standard (His Word, His law) by which the nation is measured.
- Verdict: the structure (Israel’s kingdom, religion, and society) is crooked and must fall.
- God says: ○ “I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel” ○
“I will not again pass by them any more.” (no more overlooking / postponing)
 - “The high places of Isaac... sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”
- Here the ten-tribe kingdom will actually fall: sanctuaries destroyed, house of Jeroboam struck.
- Yet even here, in the wider book, the idea of a remnant remains—God will judge the system, but not blot out all the people.

(Then comes the narrative interlude: Amaziah the priest of Bethel rejects Amos, tells him to go back to Judah; Amos insists he was called directly by God as a shepherd prophet, and pronounces personal judgment on Amaziah and exile on Israel.)

4. **Vision 4 – Basket of Summer Fruit** (Amos 8:1–3) A basket of “summer fruit” (over-ripe fruit).

- Hebrew wordplay: qayits (summer fruit) ~ qēts (end).
→ The people are like over-ripe, rotting fruit: ripe for judgment.
- God says:

“The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.”

- Result: ○ Temple songs become howlings.
 - Many dead bodies everywhere, thrown out in silence.
- The rest of chapter 8 explains why: ○ Economic oppression: swallowing up the poor, shrinking measures, inflating prices, cheating scales, turning debtors into slaves.
 - Religious hypocrisy: impatient to get holy days over so business can resume; using religion but living by greed.
 - Judgment signs:
 - Cosmic darkening (day of the LORD imagery).
 - Feasts turned to mourning, deepest grief (“mourning of an only son”).
 - Famine of hearing the words of the LORD: they will seek His Word and not find it, having first rejected it.

So: Israel is shown as morally rotten, judged economically, socially, spiritually, and finally cut off from God’s Word for a time.

5. **Vision 5 – The Lord at the Altar** (Amos 9:1–4)

The Lord stands on the altar and orders it struck so the whole structure collapses.

- Likely the idolatrous altar (e.g. at Bethel), representing the whole sinful religious-political system.
- “Smite the lintel/capital... cut them in the head... I will slay the last of them with the sword.”
- No escape: ○ Dig to Sheol? He takes them from there. ○ Climb to heaven? He brings them down.
 - Hide on Carmel? He finds them. ○ Hide in the sea? The serpent bites them.
 - Go into captivity? The sword follows them.
- This pictures total, inescapable judgment on the sinful kingdom.

Yet immediately comes the balancing word:

“I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob...” (9:8)

- God will sift Israel among the nations like grain in a sieve: ○ All the “sinners of my people” perish,
 - but “not the least grain” (the real seed, the remnant) falls to the ground lost.
- So the sinful kingdom is wiped out; the remnant is preserved.

Final Note – Restoration of David’s Kingdom (Amos 9:11–15)

After the visions of judgment comes the great restoration promise:

- God will raise up the fallen “tabernacle of David”, repair its breaches, rebuild it “as in the days of old.”
- Under this restored Davidic rule: ○ A remnant of nations (Edom and “all the heathen called by my name”) will seek the Lord.
 - The land will be supernaturally fertile: plowman catching up with reaper, hills flowing with wine.
 - God will re-plant Israel in their land, never to be uprooted again. The New Testament (Acts 15) quotes Amos 9 to show that Gentiles being called by God’s name now fits into this same prophetic pattern.

**Amos
7:1–3**
Thus
hath
the
Lord
GOD

shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.² And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.³ The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

Verses 1–3 discuss Amos’s first vision;
verses 4–6 the second; verses 7–9 the
third.

There are five visions in the book of Amos. Three appear here in chapter 7; after a short interlude, the fourth comes in 8:1, and the fifth from 9:1 onward.

In each vision the theme is the same: judgement is coming, yet a remnant will be preserved. In the third vision the prophecy is applied specifically to events which have now been historical for some 2,700 years. Yet the underlying principle remains the same—one systematically set forth in the New Testament—that only a remnant, sometimes a very small minority, would be saved.

Judgement comes; but can anyone escape it? Yes—if they adhere to the Word of God. In the shortest possible terms: they must believe Him and trust in Him.

A vision shows something, but the meaning is symbolic. For example, in the case of the locusts that “eat the grass of the land”, this is not new in Scripture. At the outset I noted the connection between Amos and the preceding book, Joel, where the Day of the LORD is likewise a central theme. Joel also speaks of the land being devoured by locusts (Joel 1:4; 2:25). There it refers to the judgement upon the Jewish state by invading armies, symbolised by locusts. Thus in Amos 7 we immediately recognise the theme: foreign armies that would ravage the land. Initially this would be the Assyrians. Hence the idea, in some circles, that the future fulfilment must again involve Assyria. I have never been able to find that in Scripture. At most one may say that Assyria serves as the type of what will come in the future.

Verse 1 speaks of the late growth—after the king’s mowing—which implies the end of the harvest. This is decisive: the intention is that the matter must now be brought to an end with a final judgement upon the nation. Verse 2 states that, if it continues, the locusts will consume everything—but it has not yet happened. That gives Amos the opportunity to intercede on behalf of the people (verse 5).

Where else have we seen this? In Moses, Daniel, and Solomon. Generally speaking, it is the leaders of the people who, being entitled to represent the nation, intercede before the Lord. Amos was not such a leader, yet the recurring pattern in Scripture is that the one who leads the people is also the one who mediates for them. Ultimately, this anticipates the true and only Leader of Israel—the Lord Jesus, the Mediator between God and humanity, and between God and His people.

Here Amos is found in that position, making him a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thanks to Him there will be such a remnant. Whoever remains, whoever is saved—it is always through Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant.

Amos 7:3

“The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.”

You often read in the Bible that the LORD “repented”, and that troubles us, because we clearly do not properly understand the word repent in this context.

The Biblical word carries the sense of comfort or consolation. The verbs to repent and to comfort are in fact one and the same Hebrew word: nacham. The name Noah is derived from it, as is Nahum, “the comforter”.

The first two occurrences of this word in Scripture help most:

Genesis 5:28–29

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:

And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.

Here, the Bible itself explains the name “Noah”, using the word comfort.

A few verses further on the same root appears again:

Genesis 6:5–7

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

The idea behind “repenteth” is that God brings about a change. He brings in an improvement. You could almost translate it as renew: to introduce something new in place of the old, which is taken away. Hence you can say: a change is brought in. But where the word looks forward to what is new—what is coming—they translate it with “to comfort”. (Strong's number H5162 nacham)

Through Noah, and in the days of Noah, a new world would come. The old world would be judged, and something new would take its place—and that is the comfort. So we need to grasp the full sense of the word.

It is not primarily about a divine “emotion”, as though God simply feels sorry. It is about action: the LORD does something; He brings in something new, and removes the old. A beautiful illustration is Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24. In Genesis 23 Sarah, Abraham's wife and Isaac's mother, dies. In the tent of the deceased Sarah, Rebekah becomes Isaac's wife. Then we read:

Genesis 24:67

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Here you see what comfort really is: one woman is gone, another comes in. Without saying anything unkind about Sarah, you can safely assume that Isaac is better off than before.

So it is when “it repenteth the LORD”:

“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.” (Hebrews 10:9, KJV) That makes the Lord, by definition, the Comforter.

So in Amos 7:3, “The LORD repented for this” means the LORD would intervene. For if He did nothing, not only this people—Jacob, in Amos 7:2—but in fact the entire creation would be lost. The “repenting” lies in this: that the Lord brings forth something good, a remnant, out of what was not good and had to be set aside.

Paul expresses the principle like this:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Seen that way, the whole work of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ falls under “it repented the LORD”. He acts—He does something about it—so that people may be saved. Those who do not wish it, need not. And because most do not wish it, the result is that only a remnant is saved and comforted.

Amos 7:4–6

The second vision: fire

Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.⁵ Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.⁶ The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

The LORD intended to end the contention by judging with fire. That fire “devoured the great deep”. If you look up the word “deep” (tehom), its first use in Scripture is of the waters, the sea. The picture is that the fire is so intense that it consumes even the waters.

It also “did eat up a part” of the land—not yet completely. But then Amos, whose name actually means “burden-bearer”, steps in again as a type of Christ. He pleads that no one could stand in such a fire, which represents judgement.

Once more, a remnant is spared. Someone intervenes, someone stands in the breach. There is a Comforter, so that there might be salvation—for a remnant in practice, for the Comforter is the One who secures that outcome.

In the same way, heaven and earth (the old creation) will ordinarily pass away; but because of this comfort, because of the repenting of the LORD, something will be preserved out of the old creation—through the Mediator. That is the principle here. And so it would be with the ten tribes.

Amos 7:7–9

The third vision: the plumbline

Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.⁸ And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:⁹ And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Why does the name Isaac suddenly appear here? We are used to hearing of Israel, Jacob, or even Ephraim. But here we read “the high places of Isaac”.

The thought put forward is this: after this people went into exile, the greater part of the ten tribes came to be known under the name of Isaac—the sons of Isaac, namely the Saxons. In some ancient writings an i still appears at the front: Isaksons, later shortened to Saxons. Isaac is suddenly mentioned here because, later in history, we learn more about them under that name—though not any longer from Scripture itself.

The Lord stands upon a wall built according to a plumbline, and He holds the plumbline in His hand. He measures the wall and finds it faulty, so to speak—and therefore judgement must fall.

Jeroboam (the second) was then king over the ten-tribe kingdom. Against his house the LORD would rise up “with the sword”.

Thus, although the preservation of a remnant is taught, it is just as clearly stated that this land, this state, would cease to exist—and so it did.

The plumbline is a picture of the Word of God. It represents a standard being applied. It is a measuring instrument. Lead, as a metal, speaks of heaviness and weight, just as the Law is weighty. God measures by His Word, by His standard.

Ultimately, the Word of God will be set right in the very midst of Israel. The plumbline points towards a remnant that will indeed be preserved. That is the point of these three visions or parables.

The Biblical idea is that throughout history, from Adam onwards, there has always been a believing remnant among mankind—a portion that remains, withdrawn from or rescued out of the world as such, and therefore also from God’s dealings with the world in judgement. So too, among the ten tribes of Israel, a remnant would be preserved—in a special way and “according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5). Judgement is ultimately stayed. There is a part that never enters the fire in the vision of the flames, or land that is not eaten by the locusts.

Yet verse 9 still says that “the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste”. Those high places, that is, the land, their sacred sites and centres, would be ruined. The LORD Himself would rise up against the house of Jeroboam “with the sword”—a reference to the coming of Assyria.

After the deportation of the ten-tribe kingdom, Assyrians were settled in the emptied territory. From these mixed populations came the Samaritans. In the New Testament the Samaritans are effectively treated as a sort of remnant in the land of the ten tribes. It is not numerically impressive, but it forms a beautiful illustration.

The speaker’s father used to argue—and it is quite plausible—that the Samaritans are a type of the Church. They are non-Jewish, and both Jews and Samaritans are keenly aware of that. And yet they have, in some way, a link with the Jews; they are Gentiles who nevertheless know the God of Moses.

For our own day it is very instructive to notice the Lord Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman. She is the first from among the nations to come to faith in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah (John 4). Again, it is striking that the Lord Himself is portrayed as the good Samaritan (Luke 10). And another lovely example is the story of the ten lepers (Luke 17). They are all cleansed (purified) and sent off to show themselves to the priests; but only one comes back—a Samaritan. The other nine are never seen again. The symbolism is not difficult to grasp: the ten lepers picture the ten tribes; the one who returns, cleansed, pictures the Church drawn from those ten tribes.

The ten-tribe kingdom as a political entity ceased to exist. A reminder of it remains in the form of the Samaritans. How do we know there ever was such a kingdom? Because even today there are still Samaritans, first introduced in Scripture some 2,500 years ago when they took the place of the ten tribes. They are a memorial to the ten tribes, who must still exist somewhere.

And there really is no doubt that this people have appeared in history under the name of Isaac—among others, as the Saxons.

Amos 7:10–11

Reaction to Amos's words

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.¹¹ For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

The visions of Amos, these messages, evidently became known and were discussed; and so a response follows.

The Bethel mentioned here is not the same as Jacob's Bethel in Genesis 35, though it bears the same name and so the same meaning ("house of God").

The reaction arises in Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom, more specifically in Bethel, one of the sites where the altars for the golden calf stood. Bethel seems to have been the favoured place, also for the king, since verse 13 implies that there was a royal residence there.

In this important city, a priest responds—likely a sort of high priest, a man of authority. His name is Amaziah ("the strength of Jehovah"), and yet he is involved in the worship of the golden calf.

Earlier, among the united twelve tribes, the calf had already appeared in the days of Moses and Aaron. In some way this calf is still associated with Jehovah, even though it is idolatry. That golden calf is nonetheless a type of Christ: wherever He is honoured and served, the Law has effectively reached its end. When Moses smashed the stone tablets as soon as he saw the golden calf, he did, typologically, exactly what was expected of him—where Christ reigns, there is the throne of grace, and the Law retires; yet Moses had to go back up the mountain to receive a new set of tablets, because in that dispensation the Law still had to run its course. When Christ truly reigns, when the Messiah has come, then the New Covenant begins.

Amaziah accuses Amos of having "conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel". In fact, that is precisely where the Word of God must be spoken: in the midst of the people.

The word “midst” points first to the central place—the place where the throne stands. The tree of life also stood “in the midst of the garden” (Genesis 2:9).

The further complaint, “the land is not able to bear all his words”, means: if Amos’s words come to pass, there will be no land left. The land will collapse under the weight of such judgement. We are not told what the king replied. He stays somewhat in the background here; it is the priest who acts.

Verse 11 adds:

“For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.”

The second half of that verse Amos did indeed say. Perhaps he also said that Jeroboam would die by the sword, but that precise wording is not recorded in the book itself. Still, it would be in keeping with the general thrust of Amos’s message, and with the way Amaziah reports it to the king. How Jeroboam himself reacted Scripture does not tell us.

Amos 7:12–13

Amaziah’s command to Amos

Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there.¹³ But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

This is nothing less than a threat, a ban on prophesying. And it is not the first time we encounter such a ban: we saw the same pattern already in Amos 2:12.

The underlying assumption seems to be that prophets prophesy for money—that “eating bread” and prophesying belong together. The idea is: you speak your message and you get paid for it; in that way the prophet is maintained. In Amos’s case, Amaziah tells him to go and do that “in the land of Judah”, where he comes from. Judah and Israel—the two-tribe and ten-tribe kingdoms—were rivals at that time.

Amos 7:14–15

Amos’s answer

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:¹⁵ And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

Amos replies that he is not in prophecy as a profession. He was not a prophet, nor trained as one—he was “an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit”. It was the LORD who took him “from following the flock” and commanded him to prophesy to His people Israel.

Amos is not the only man whom the LORD took “from behind the flock” in order to lead the people or to bring them the Word of God. David is the best-known example. He was not only king, but also a prophet (Acts 2:29–30). Moses, likewise a prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10), spent forty years as a shepherd before he led Israel forty years in the wilderness. Joseph, who in his life’s story is clearly a prophetic type, was also a shepherd before he in practice became king in a foreign land.

All these men are types of the Lord Jesus, who, before He will exercise His kingship in the future, is first the Shepherd—the One who feeds, guards, and lays down His life for the flock.

Amos 7:16

Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

The LORD now returns to Amaziah's prohibition that Amos must not prophesy against Israel. Only here the name "Isaac" is used, whereas in verse 15 it was "Israel". In this way Israel and Isaac are treated as synonyms.

With "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob", the point is not the difference between those names, but their unity: God made His promises to all three. The people knew very well what was meant by Isaac here – it is another name for Israel, and in this context for the ten-tribe kingdom in particular. "Isaac" is the name they would bear, as was already said in Genesis 21:12:

"...for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Amos is told he may not "drop" his word against the house of Isaac. "To drop" is a picture of words that come from the mouth, where the "producing of moisture (water)" is involved. In Ezekiel 21:2 you find the same link between dropping and prophesying: "Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel."

After Amos has explained that the LORD Himself has chosen him to prophesy to Israel, he immediately makes use of that calling and begins to prophesy:

Amos 7:17

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

These words are spoken to Amaziah, the one who took the initiative to drive Amos away. What is announced here did indeed happen. Then you ask yourself why the two tribes (Judah) did not take warning when exactly the same kind of judgement was later announced to them. They did not believe it—even though it had already happened to the ten tribes.

"Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city" almost certainly means, by comparison with other passages, that his wife would be violated in the city. In Zechariah 14:2, where it is about the day of the LORD, it likewise says:

"...and the women ravished."

"Thy land shall be divided by line" touches Amaziah at a sensitive point. As priest of the people he is concerned for the land. He cannot bear that a prophet of the LORD comes and says that things must change and that judgement is coming. Amaziah wants to keep the people and the land as they are. But the LORD says in effect, "What land?" That land is going to be divided, and Amaziah himself will be taken away to an unclean land.

Even to this day that land is divided, and there is constant conflict about rights to the land. In practice they keep on dividing it, exactly as is written here: “thy land shall be divided by line.”

These judgements were to come upon this godless land of the sons of Isaac, the Saxons, who would not listen to the LORD. So judgement comes upon a prosperous country in the most flourishing period of the ten-tribe history.

The speaker then applies this prophetically: he believes that these same prophecies apply to the Anglo-Saxon nations in our own day. Outwardly things go well for them, but they are utterly unbelieving—or have become so. In reality they are committing whoredom: they still have the Word of the Lord in their midst, but they take absolutely no notice of it.

That will certainly be the case after the rapture of the Church, when believers from among the ten tribes have been taken away. The thought is that these prophecies then apply to the judgements that will come upon the western nations. A believing remnant will be gathered out of them and brought back to Canaan (Palestine). Very little will remain, and that would explain why these western countries play no real role in Biblical prophecy.

The often-heard idea that the Roman Empire will be restored in Europe is, and in my view, it has no Biblical support. What Scripture does point to is the revival of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great, a Middle Eastern power-block. That could re-emerge because very little will be left of the western world. The days of this western order really are numbered; it will come under judgement as well.

It begins with Israel, and especially with those peoples who carry the greatest responsibility—those who, when Judah was in unbelief, effectively received the priestly role in their place some 2,000 years ago. But if they also fail, the same principle applies:

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Amos 8:1–3

The fourth vision: a basket of summer fruit

Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.² And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.³ And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

This chapter begins with the fourth vision of Amos and a lengthy explanation of it. It is not a pleasant prophecy at all, but it is one of many such passages in Scripture. For God may indeed be a God of love, but He is also a God of righteousness. That is exactly what one might reasonably expect of God: that He will judge unrighteousness. And that is precisely what He announces here—in fact in two phases: First, the judgement in the past on Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom.

Then, a judgement still future, in the days of the second coming of Christ. This passage clearly points in that direction.

Everything is hung on this vision, whose meaning is not immediately obvious when you read it. Amos sees a basket of summer fruit, and the Lord explains that this is a picture of Israel: the people are like over-ripe fruit—ripe for judgement.

The translation “summer fruit” sounds quite gentle. The underlying word qayits (קַיִץ) is related to our word “kats” as in “kats verrot” – fruit that is over-ripe, has fallen, and is rotting. There is also a play on sound in Hebrew between qayits (summer fruit) and qēts (end). The idea is that the fruit has fallen, it is done. Thus the LORD says:

“The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.” (Amos 8:2, KJV)

Note that He says “my people Israel”, which in the first instance means the ten tribes, not the Jews (Judah). And then: “I will not again pass by them any more” – the sense is: I will visit them no more, I will no longer come among them or let Myself be heard. No more songs will be sung; instead “the songs of the temple shall be howlings”. And then: “many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.” The exact wording may be a little difficult, but the drift is clear: what remains is wailing, and otherwise silence—nothing more.

So in the vision Amos simply sees a basket of ripe fruit, and the LORD gives this explanation.

Amos 8:4

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

Here the LORD states why this judgement is coming, and it is painful reading. To “swallow up the needy” means that the poor are effectively turned into the property—in practice the slaves—of the wealthy. The material and financial room for the poor steadily shrinks.

Our modern economy is largely built on the concept of interest. In that system, even while nothing is actually being produced, money flows from the poor to the rich. You do not need to be an economist to see that. The poor pay interest, the rich receive it—it never works the other way round.

The government’s proper task is to correct such injustice. Scripture actually forbids interest among God’s people. And I am quite sure that in the thousand years (the Millennium) the very notion of interest will not exist. The idea that money can “work for itself” is absurd.

In principle, everything is free: raw materials come out of the ground and cost nothing. The only real cost is labour. You can earn something by doing work and producing something, and you receive money in return. But money that simply sits somewhere on deposit produces nothing of itself. If it does “produce” something, it is because others are working. If you can live on your interest, that means others are providing for your livelihood.

That is why the verse continues: “even to make the poor of the land to fail”—that is, to reduce them to nothing, so that in the end they either disappear or have no voice and no rights left. Either they are driven out, or they are enslaved, and both situations are described here.

These practices still go on today. In many countries this is a massive problem. It is no coincidence that when power changes hands violently, it often leads to land expropriation and redistribution. You can ask the people of Zimbabwe, for instance, what that looks like.

Amos 8:5–6

Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?⁶ That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

At new moon it was a feast (Numbers 10:10). No work, a rest day—and so no opportunity to earn more money. That also comes out in the practices described here. “Making the ephah small, and the shekel great” shows that they tamper with measures and weights. They long for the feast days to be over so that they can get back to enriching themselves, just as verse 4 described.

Verse 6 again mentions turning the poor into slaves. If someone could no longer pay his debts, he had to sell himself and became a slave, losing the right to himself. The exploiter is actively seeking more such slaves.

They also sell the refuse of the wheat – the chaff. They mix the useless husks in with the grain, but still charge the price of proper wheat. It is like watering down wine and then selling the diluted product as if it were full strength. That is how trade has always worked.

It is no accident that in Scripture the word for “trade” is essentially the same as for “fraud”. In Ezekiel 28:16 we read: “By the multitude of thy merchandise...” and that can rightly be read as “by the multitude of your cheating”.

The same thing is done with truth: truth mixed with falsehood is just as deceptive. And people do that for all kinds of reasons.

Amos 8:7

The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

The LORD will certainly not forget these works—never will He forget them. That is how the phrase “in eternity” should be understood here: He will most definitely bring judgement upon them.

This concerns Israel, who had clear commands from God that dealt with exactly these matters. They could know, and so they are guilty before the LORD.

The “excellency of Jacob” is the LORD Himself (compare Amos 6:8). He is the glory of Jacob, and He will also give glory to Jacob. Jacob is the forefather of this people, and afterwards his name becomes the name of the nation.

Amos 8:8

Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Here a judgement upon the land is announced, but it is really about the whole people, the entire nation, being shaken. They will be so upset that they reel and stagger – that is what it means for the land to be “in turmoil”.

This judgement is compared to the Nile flood in Egypt, when the land is yearly covered with water. The judgement of God will come like a flood, sweeping across the land and wiping out everything. It will bring an end to the land—as a nation in its existing form.

This happened historically in the past, at the fall of the ten-tribe kingdom, formally in 722 BC. But in verse 9 we are clearly moved beyond that time—and if we did not see it already there, verse 10 shows we are suddenly in the days of the second coming of Christ, with all that goes with it.

Amos 8:9–10

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

The phrase “in that day” should not be taken too literally as a specific calendar date. It means: on that day—namely that future day. It points forward, as in Amos 9:11, to the days of the second coming of Christ, the coming of the Messiah to bring judgement on the nations and then to establish His kingdom over them.

From the expression “I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day” it becomes clear which “day” is meant: the day of the LORD. The verb “darken” is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:2, where, as the result of a judgement on the creation, darkness lay upon the face of the deep.

Joel says: Joel

2:31

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

When the heavens grow dark, sun and moon appear blood-red because the light is largely blocked. You see a similar effect at sunrise or sunset: a large part of the light is scattered in the atmosphere; red light is the hardest to scatter, so that is what reaches you.

This is not a normal astronomical event, because the sun and the moon are darkened at the same time. Between a solar eclipse and a lunar eclipse there must always be around fourteen days: a lunar eclipse requires a full moon, a solar eclipse a new moon. So this cannot be an ordinary eclipse; it must be an atmospheric event—likely massive dust clouds caused by earthquakes. That seems the most reasonable explanation.

This is the return of Christ, beginning with these cosmic signs.

Isaiah says:

Isaiah 13:9–10

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

There it says the sun will be darkened “in his going forth”—when it rises. In Amos it is “at noon”, in the middle of the day.

And then in Amos 8:10: “I will make it as the mourning of an only son”. That is the deepest kind of grief, and it points to the siege, conquest, and destruction of Jerusalem. The final fulfilment of this will be at the end of Daniel’s 70th week, on the day when the Lord appears. Verses 9 and 10 therefore look ahead to the final judgement on the ten tribes. These words do indeed apply to our so-called western civilisation as well. In the past Israel lost the LORD and put all sorts of things in His place. They were no longer interested in Him, but in injustice and in the “rights” of the economically strongest. So it is today in the western world.

This judgement does not belong to our present dispensation, but to the next—after the rapture of the Church. Once all believers are gone, the western world will be in a very poor state spiritually. Without the influence of believers, the West must surely collapse rapidly. The judgements on Judah will have their final and greatest fulfilment in the days of the second coming, in Daniel’s 70th week. Just as all those other prophecies—for example those about the ultimate destruction of Babylon—reach their full weight only at Christ’s return, so these prophecies of judgement on the ten tribes will also reach their full realisation in that same period.

Amos 8:11–12

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

This has, in a sense, already happened to the ten tribes. They were taken away into exile, and that seemed to be the end. Then they wandered about, apparently seeking truth, the words of the LORD. It took centuries before they found them again—in connection with the first coming of Christ and the beginning of our present dispensation, when the Gospel was preached to them.

Looking to the future: after the rapture, there will no longer be on earth such a royal, priestly people “unto whom were committed the oracles of God”. So there will once more be a period in which people cannot find that Word. Initially, it is not even intended for them; it is addressed exclusively to the Jewish people. God wills that the Jews should be the first to come to faith in the Lord Jesus as Messiah, and so the message will first be preached to them alone.

The main point, both in the past and in the future, is this: there are times when people do not have the Word. They will “seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.” You can take “the words of the LORD” here quite broadly—something like norms and values, for these are rooted in His Word. For decades we have been busily casting such things aside, “demolishing sacred cows”, sweeping away the last taboos.

The Word is missing; it has vanished, because people first rejected it. And so the LORD in effect says: “Then you may do without it for a while.” That is a general characteristic of our dispensation: if people will not have His Word, He withdraws.

Amos 8:13–14

In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.¹⁴ They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Those “fair virgins and young men” are people in the very strength of life, yet in spite of all that strength they cannot summon the will or inner power to live. They faint for thirst – not only physically, but spiritually and morally. They lack norms and values; there are no ideals, nothing worth living for. That is roughly the thought.

They “swear by the sin of Samaria.” If you replace “sin” with “fault”, “offence” or “transgression”, you catch the sense. What do they swear by? By the idolatry in Samaria – by the god of Samaria, and so by the god of Dan, as the verse adds. Samaria was the capital of the ten-tribe kingdom; Dan was one of the main sanctuaries of the golden calf, the other being Bethel. And Beersheba is also mentioned in verse 14.

To “swear” here is, in the strict sense, to bind oneself under something, to invoke it; it is a religious act. They say, in effect, “Long live your god, O Dan!”

“The manner of Beersheba” (literally “way of Beersheba”) should likewise be understood as something like “god” or “cult”, because way means manner, mode of worship. In English “way” still has that sense (“in this way”). So the text implies that in Beersheba as well there was a sanctuary or cult centre—though Scripture does not state it explicitly, it is the natural conclusion.

Beersheba was regarded as the southernmost city of Israel. Although Beersheba (or Lachish) was originally assigned to Judah (Joshua 15:20, 39; 2 Samuel 24:7), it was later given to the tribe of Simeon, one of the ten tribes (Joshua 19:2, 9; 1 Chronicles 4:28).

Beersheba therefore did indeed belong to the ten tribes.

With these place names in verse 14, the whole land and the whole people are in view – including the two tribes. In the days of Samuel and the kings, before the kingdom was divided, the expression “from Dan to Beersheba” covered the entire area, Judah included. The whole nation is regarded as having turned aside from the LORD. They have devised for themselves their own god, though ultimately derived from Jehovah—derived away from Him, so to speak. That is a self-willed religion.

If I think of Christianity as a world religion, then as a system it is likewise, in large part, a self-made religion, invented by men and loosely derived from the God of the Bible— indeed drawn away from Him. The Lord Himself has no real place in it anymore. It is about other things, man-made traditions, within which people give themselves room to practise all sorts of unrighteousness—just as they did in their economic system. This is not only contrary to the will of the LORD, but also against any decent moral sense. Cheating one another and climbing over each other’s backs to get ahead is not right. It ought to be obvious that such “norms and values” are no foundation on which to build, or even maintain, a society.

Amos 9:1

I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

The Lord is standing upon the altar and says, “Smite the lintel of the door.” The Hebrew word translated “lintel” is the same word used again in verse 7 (H3731, Kaphtor). There it is left untranslated, as the name of an island, Caphtor. Here in verse 1 it most likely means a capital or “top” of a pillar.

The basic idea of the word is “that which binds together”, where all the lines meet and which holds the structure as one—hence “knob/knot”. Here it most naturally refers to a pillar and the top of it, the capital. If the head-piece is struck, the whole structure collapses. That is what is being described: strike the “head”, and the whole building in which the altar stands comes down.

Which altar is this? Perhaps the altar in Dan, but at any rate the one in Bethel, the chief centre of this idolatry, repeatedly mentioned and the principal cause of the judgement pronounced over the ten tribes. The destruction of that temple with its altar is the illustration used here. It is a vision, but at the same time an image of the judgement on the whole state, the whole people. The temple represents that people, and all who are involved in that idolatry and everything around it.

The judgement on the temple is thus a picture of the judgement on the nation. And that is set out here in detail, and repeated in different forms to emphasise how thorough and inescapable that judgement will be. No one will be able to flee; no one will escape. This was so in the Assyrian exile of the ten tribes, and the same principle will also apply to the western world when its time of judgement comes.

Amos 9:2–4

Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

In the Hebrew, “hell” here is Sheol, the realm of the dead, the underworld. The word “hell” in older English could also mean a cellar or underground place—a low place. These are hyperboles, deliberate overstatements to show that whatever they do— however deep they go or however high they climb to try to escape judgement—it will not succeed. The Lord can find them anywhere.

The “top of Carmel” (literally “the height of Carmel”) is in the territory of the ten tribes. Carmel means “orchard” or “fruitful place”. Formerly it was heavily forested, a place where one could hide—“to hide themselves” means to seek a hiding place. But even that will not help, any more than the other attempts mentioned.

“Though they go into captivity before their enemies” refers to the exile; even there, things will not go well for them. On no front will they be secure.

Prophecies of this kind go back to Deuteronomy, to the words of Moses shortly before his death—his farewell address, as it were. There he sketches the whole future history of Israel in outline. Near the end of that chapter we read:

Deuteronomy 28:64–68

And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone.⁶⁵ And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:⁶⁶ And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:⁶⁷ In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.⁶⁸ And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the great majority of those who remained fled to Egypt, and there sold themselves as slaves—the quickest way to secure food and shelter. So the history of Israel began with slavery in Egypt, and ended again with slavery in Egypt. Only at the second coming of Christ, when a remnant is saved, will that slavery finally be broken.

What Moses foretold about Israel in general is taken up again in Amos 9 with regard to the Assyrian exile of the ten tribes. How it went for them in that exile we do not know in detail. We do know that they soon fled from that region, moved northwards across the Caucasus into previously uninhabited areas, and had to clear and cultivate much of Europe. But they certainly had no rest.

Amos 9:5

And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

Here very strong language is used: the total destruction of the state and the people. Only the Lord GOD of hosts (Adonai Jehovah Sabaoth) can do that. As He says in Exodus 19:5, “for all the earth is mine.” He can do with it as He pleases.

We have already seen the reference to the river of Egypt in Amos 8:8. The land will be overwhelmed as Egypt was annually flooded by the Nile. So a flood of judgement will cover that land. The LORD is able and determined to do this. He who made the world is also perfectly able to judge it.

Amos 9:6

It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

These “stories” or upper chambers are what verse 5 called His hosts, His armies. The highest chamber is heaven itself.

“He that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth” was said earlier in Amos 5:8; the expression is repeated here.

“The LORD is his name” – Jehovah is His Name, and He is the One they have to do with. Not some idol, but the Creator of heaven and earth, who will not be mocked. He is indeed longsuffering (for example, Numbers 14:18), but His patience does have an end.

Amos 9:7

Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

“Ethiopians” here probably refers to what we call Ethiopia (Cush), though we cannot be absolutely certain. A Moor is black—“as black as soot”, as the old children’s rhyme says—and descends from Cush, the father of Nimrod (Genesis 10:8). The Moors are thus descendants of Ham.

Humanity after the flood is, in principle, divided in three through the sons of Noah. Whether we like it or not, and whether it is “politically correct” or not, the fact remains that, as a general pattern and with many exceptions, the descendants of Ham stand furthest away from the sphere of God’s blessings. We still speak of the “third world”, or of “developing countries”—meaning, in truth, under-developed countries that are still catching up compared with others. Whether that is good or not is another question; it is simply an observation.

The LORD is saying, in effect: “As far as I am concerned, it makes no difference. You are children of Israel, but you might just as well be children of Cush.” Not only in God’s eyes, but also in their own: the ten tribes evidently no longer see any real difference. Their deliverance from Egypt, which is referred to next, has become to them nothing more than a historical fact: Israel came out of Egypt, the Philistines came from Caphtor, the Syrians from Kir – every nation has its origins somewhere, and Israel happens to have come out of Egypt. But the point is that this did not just “happen.” The LORD brought Israel up out of Egypt and made them His own people. That thought they have evidently lost. If they no longer know the LORD as the God who brought them out of Egypt, then they are, spiritually, no different from any other nation.

Amos 9:8

Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

This is what we have been expecting after all the judgements announced in the previous verses. The sinful kingdom will be destroyed from the earth, together with all the sinners in it.

Yet the LORD immediately adds: “saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob.” However severe the judgement, there will always be a remnant left—that is a constant principle throughout Scripture. That remnant must be composed of believers. At first you gain the impression that no one will be saved, and only at the end are you told that some will be preserved. It cannot be very many, but how many is “many”, and how few is “few”? We do not know, but we should not expect large numbers. The concept of a remnant is

introduced already in Genesis 45, where Joseph makes himself known to his brothers. Every time they come to Egypt, there are always only ten of them. The whole story revolves around this ten-tribe question and around a hidden kingdom abroad under Joseph, unknown to his brothers. It is all rich in church-truth. When Joseph reveals himself, he speaks of that remnant:

Genesis 45:7

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Here, prophetically, it is about the deliverance of Israel, and the idea of a remnant is linked with being saved alive. In the midst of famine where life is impossible, there is still life—but in a foreign land.

Later, the theme of the remnant is developed extensively in Isaiah, where it is one of the main subjects. Already in chapter 1 it appears, and the apostle Paul cites it in:

Romans 9:27–29

Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:²⁸ For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.²⁹ And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

Where the Old Testament speaks of such a remnant in the future, it includes the Church of today as well. We are that remnant in this present age. Yet this does not exclude a further, future remnant in the days of the second coming of Christ—there will be one again, or rather still. There will always be a remnant somewhere on earth that heeds the Word of God, puts its trust in Him, and is therefore blessed by God.

Amos 9:9–10

For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.¹⁰ All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. The house of Israel will be scattered among all nations, but also regathered, for a remnant is to be saved.

The “least grain” is a kernel of seed. It is a hopeful picture: the house of Israel is scattered like seed, then springs up again. A remnant is preserved, because the LORD “will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob” (verse 8).

All the sinners of His people, however, will die by the sword—especially those who complacently say, “The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.” That kind of blind optimism will be shattered.

From verse 11 onwards the focus shifts to this remnant, and to the restoration that will follow.

Amos 9:11

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

“David’s fallen tent”

- “Tent” (or “booth/tabernacle”) = the Davidic dynasty, the kingdom under David’s line.
- “Fallen” = the kingdom is collapsed, humiliated, weak.
- Israel has split (north/south), and Amos is saying:
 - The united, God-ruled kingdom under David looks like a wreck.
 - God Himself will rebuild what humans have ruined. “I will repair... restore... build” Notice who acts: God.
- Israel’s kings ruined things;
- God becomes the master-builder of a new kingdom.
- This is grace after judgment: they don’t rebuild themselves; God does it.

Here we have promises about “in that day” which have not yet been fulfilled in any way. They concern not Israel as a whole, but specifically the house of David, and that Davidic monarchy has not been restored to this day.

The “tabernacle of David” is a rather lowly description of that royal house—a fallen hut, a ruin. There is virtually nothing left of it. Yet the LORD says He will raise up that fallen hut of David. This means there will once again be a Davidic royal house; a descendant, an heir, will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Though not yet fulfilled, there can be no doubt who is meant: it is the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the New Testament explicitly says that He is of the house and lineage of David (Luke 2). The Old Testament also states, at length and in detail, that the son and heir of David will sit on the throne of his father David in Jerusalem.

The “breaches” are the gaps, fissures—the “breaches” in the English of Amos. “Close up the breaches” (Strong’s H6556. perets). The broken walls will be repaired; the building restored. The Lord will raise up what has been torn down and build the house of David as in the days of old.

The purpose is given in verse 12.

Amos 9:12

That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

The “tabernacle of David” now becomes plural: “that they may possess ...” There are two ways to understand this: The house of David = all Israel.

All Israel will be a kingdom of priests, so in that sense all Israel can be called “the house of David”.

The Messiah together with His body, the Church.

In the New Testament, when Christ the Messiah is in view, He often becomes corporate, including the Church, His body. Under the name “Christ” we must then understand Jesus the Lord together with His people.

These two explanations need not exclude each other, for the Church is also reckoned as Israel—indeed as the first part of Israel: the firstfruits from Israel, placed above the rest of Israel in the divine order. God is the Head of Christ; Christ is the Head of the Church; the Church is the head of Israel; and Israel stands at the head of the nations. Thus “they” will possess the remnant of Edom and “all the heathen” (the nations) who are called by the LORD’s Name—that is, those from those nations who have come to faith. Those who do not believe will perish in the days when this royal house is restored. I hesitate to say “be killed”, but that is precisely what Scripture says.

Not only will there be a remnant from Edom, but also from the nations in general. At the head of the unbelieving nations stands Edom (Esau), named here first among the peoples. When Israel is unbelieving, it is in fact not “Israel” but “Jacob” and belongs among the nations; then Edom, Esau, the firstborn, stands at the head. So Edom functions in Scripture as a type of unbelieving Israel in general, and unbelieving Jewry in particular. Whenever you read about Edom, you should ask to what extent it refers to the nations in general.

In Acts 15 the words of Amos 9:11–12 are quoted, but “Edom” is omitted, because in principle it makes no difference:

Acts 15:15–17

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,¹⁶ After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:¹⁷ That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19), cites Amos. Verse 17 begins with “that”, giving the result—just as Amos 9:12 does. Those who will seek the Lord are “the residue of men”, that is, “all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called”.

In my view, Amos 9:12 ought to be translated in essentially the same way, because the Hebrew allows it and the apostolic quotation confirms the sense. We naturally link this with Acts 2, where Joel is cited:

Joel 2:32 / Acts 2:21

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered... (Joel 2:32)

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

To call upon the name of the LORD is the same as to have His Name called over you— that He might take pity on you and acknowledge you as His own.

Strikingly, the Jewish people precisely do not call upon the Name of the LORD. They deliberately avoid doing so; indeed, it is forbidden in their religious system. That is serious, for they should call on that Name in order to be saved. Finally, a remnant will do so—at the very lowest point of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21). And similar things will hold for the other nations as well.

Both Acts 15:17 and Amos 9:12 end: “saith the Lord ... that doeth this” (in Acts, “all these things”). The Lord will do this—in His time. James adds the word “all”, underlining that God has multiple things in hand; He is working out a plan in history.

That sense of a divine plan unfolding through time has largely been lost in much of modern Christianity. The New Covenant, long promised, has also been neglected. People retain only what seems immediately useful for themselves, and so serious Bible study is despised. What matters, so it is thought, is that we enjoy a cosy sense of togetherness; the Word itself is forgotten because man has been placed at the centre. Then one no longer sees that in the Word of God it is Christ who stands at the centre. People limit themselves to the work the Lord does, perhaps for us personally, and stop there. They no longer see that the Lord still has much to do in the future before the Last Day.

The promises of a lasting kingdom had already been given to David in 2 Samuel 7, at the time when his death was announced...

2 Samuel 7:11–16

And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.¹² And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:¹⁵ But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.¹⁶ And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

David was to be given a lasting kingdom. If, on the basis of the previous chapters, you might be inclined to doubt that, Amos ends by confirming once more that it will indeed happen, exactly as the LORD has spoken.

We encounter this promise of restoration again in Acts 15. In the second coming of Christ, when He returns to gather Israel, this will be fulfilled. There can be no doubt about it.

The prophecy in Jeremiah 30 also concerns the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Over that chapter stands the heading: “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying... concerning Israel and Judah” – it is about the deliverance of both Israel and Judah. It speaks of coming “days”, of “that day”, and “the day” – the Day of the LORD.

Jeremiah 30:3–10

For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.⁴ And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.⁵ For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.⁶ Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?⁷ Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.⁸ For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:⁹ But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.¹⁰ Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save

thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

The LORD says that He Himself will “bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah.” My people (singular) is then immediately specified by the names “Israel and Judah”. As one people, the Lord will bring both the two and the ten tribes “again to the land that I gave to their fathers”. After that they shall “possess it” as an inheritance. The LORD announces “a time of trouble” for Jacob. That is the distress of which the Lord Jesus says in: Matthew 24:21

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Here in Jeremiah we are told that, in addition to all the distress that has already come upon Jacob (Israel and Judah together) in the past, the greatest distress is still to come. Yet Jacob will be saved out of it – as a people, that is to say; though in practice it will be a remnant, a minority, a small nation.

Verses 8 and 9 state that this remnant will serve “the LORD their God”. But it also says that they will serve “David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.” This refers to a descendant of David. He is here called “their king David”, but we know that it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is of the house of David and possesses eternal life. In reality, only One is being spoken of here:

“the LORD their God, and (that is: namely) their king David.”

Christ – the Risen and Glorified One – is the Son (Heir) of David (Matthew 1:1).

Amos 9:13

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

The land will be so fertile that the land is being sown again while it is still being harvested. There will be several harvests in one season.

It will result in abundance, aided by the “showers” or “rain in due season” which the Lord will “cause to come down”.

Normally, the Lord gives rain to His chosen people in His land, as we read in:

Deuteronomy 28:12

The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand...

However, God would withhold the fruitful rains from the promised land as a consequence of the people’s unfaithfulness:

Deuteronomy 11:17

And then the LORD’S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you. And in Solomon’s prayer:

1 Kings 8:34–35

Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.³⁵ When heaven is shut up,

and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them...

The prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, prophesied of these things in connection with the twelve tribes.

Ezekiel – “the prophet of the exile” – was the only prophet among the exiles in the Babylonian empire, though not actually in Babylon itself, but by the river Chebar, several hundred kilometres further north, in the region where parts of the ten tribes had been taken. While Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem, Daniel was in Babylon and Ezekiel was hundreds of kilometres to the north.

Ezekiel 34:22–30

Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.²³ And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.²⁴ And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.²⁵ And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.²⁶ And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.²⁷ And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.²⁸ And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.²⁹ And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.³⁰ Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD. In the words “Therefore will I save my flock” you can recognise the same situation that is described in Amos – the injustice within the nation, where the poor and weak were exploited.

The Shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is also called “David” because of His position on earth as the Head of Israel: the ultimate Heir of the throne of David, who will stand upon the earth.

Only after the people of Israel have been gathered again out of the nations back to their land will there be a true unity of the two and ten tribes (Ezekiel 37) and full restoration of the Israelite nation. The King of that nation is from the house of David. He who belongs in heaven, and has a throne there, will also set up a throne on earth. From Jerusalem He will reign. That is the restoration of the Davidic kingship, “as in the days of old”, as we read at the end of Amos 9:11.

The “Behold, the days come” in verse 13 is then taken up in the last two verses of Amos.

Amos 9:14–15

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.¹⁵ And I will plant them upon their land,

and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

The land will first become a wilderness or desolation, as Joel 2:1–2 shows, in the days of the great tribulation. It will end with the devastation of the whole land—not only the people and the cities. Therefore it must, as it were, be reclaimed anew, cleansed, rebuilt and made fruitful again. That is the final goal.

This promise from God obviously rests upon the conversion of the people – of both the two and the ten tribes of Israel. Then the Lord will make the land the most fertile on earth. These are the ultimate promises given here in Amos, simply in continuation of the preceding prophecy. There is no warrant at all for applying Amos 9:11–15 to the Church, still less to heaven.

It is clearly about the continuation of the same history: a proclamation of judgement over a godless and unjust people that refuses to listen to the Lord. The issue is not merely that they did not want to keep the law, for whether they wanted to or not, they could not keep it anyway. But they could at least have brought the prescribed sacrifices which belonged to the people and to the law of that people in that land. That was quite feasible. Even that, however, they made no move to do – and that is the point. They could also have lived reasonably honestly. But none of this took place, and worst of all, they did not want to listen to the Word of the LORD. For that reason these prophetic words of judgement do not help them, because they will not listen anyway. Nevertheless, it is declared that this same people, the people described here and over whom judgement is announced – in the first place the ten tribes – will yet be restored as a people. One day in the future there will indeed be a nation of Israel (twelve tribes) living in the land. That is not yet the case now, and it certainly was not the case in the days of Amos.

Within a reasonably foreseeable time, this must be brought to pass in the second coming of Christ and the appearing in glory of the Son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God. Amen.